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Morocco

Samuel Levy Bensusan, Archibald Stevenson Forrest

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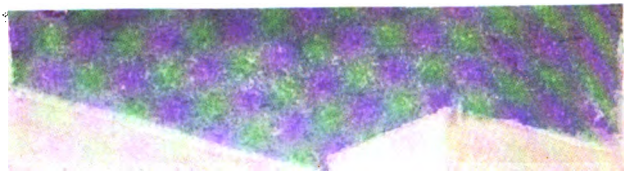

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"As I have felt, so I have written."

EÖTHEN.

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Preface

It has been a pleasant task to recall the little journey set out in the following pages, but the writer can hardly escape the thought that the title of the book promises more than he has been able to perform. While the real Morocco remains a half-known land to-day, this book does not take the traveller from the highroad. The mere idler, the wayfarer to whom Morocco is no more than one of many places of pilgrimage, must needs deal modestly with his task, even though modesty be an unfashionable virtue; and the painstaking folk who pass through this world pelting one another with hard facts will find here but little to add to their store of ammunition. This appeal is of set purpose a limited one, made to the few who are content to travel for the sake of the pleasures of the road, free from the comforts that beset them at home, and free also from the popular belief that their city, religion, morals, and social laws are the best in the world. The qualifications that fit a man to make money and acquire the means for modern travel are often fatal to proper appreciation of the unfamiliar world he proposes to visit. To restore the

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balance of things, travel agents and other far-seeing folks have contrived to inflict upon most countries within the tourist's reach all the modern conveniences by which he lives and thrives. So soon as civilising missions and missionaries have pegged out their claims, even the desert is deemed incomplete without a modern hotel or two, fitted with electric light, monstrous tariff, and served by a crowd of debased guides. In the wake of these improvements the tourist follows, finds all the essentials of the life he left at home, and, knowing nothing of the life he came to see, has no regrets. So from Algiers, Tunis, Cairo—ay, even from Jerusalem itself, all suggestion of great history has passed, and one hears among ruins, once venerable, the globe-trotter's cry of praise. "Hail Cook," he cries, as he seizes the coupons that unveil Isis and read the riddle of the Sphinx, "those about to tour salute thee."

But of the great procession that steams past Gibraltar, heavily armed with assurance and circular tickets, few favour Morocco at all, and the most of these few go no farther than Tangier. Once there, they descend upon some modern hotel, often with no more than twenty-four hours in which to master the secrets of Sunset Land.

After dinner a few of the bolder spirits among the men take counsel of a guide, who leads them to the Moorish coffee-house by the great Mosque. There they listen to the music of ghaitah and gimbri, pay a peseta for a cup of indifferent coffee, and buy an unmusical instrument or two for many times the proper price.

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Thereafter they retire to their hotel to consider how fancy can best embellish the bare facts of the evening's amusement, while the True Believers of the coffee-house (debased in the eyes of all other Believers, and, somewhat, too, in fact, by reason of their contact with the Infidel) gather up the pesetas, curse the Unbeliever and his shameless relations, and praise Allah the One who, even in these degenerate days, sends them a profit.

On the following morning the tourists ride on mules or donkeys to the showplaces of Tangier, followed by scores of beggar boys. The ladies are shown over some hareem that they would enter less eagerly did they but know the exact status of the odalisques hired to meet them. One and all troop to the bazaars, where crafty men sit in receipt of custom and relieve the Nazarene of the money whose value he does not know. Lunch follows, and then the ship's siren summons the travellers away from Morocco, to speak and write with authority for all time of the country and its problems.

With these facts well in mind, it seemed best for me to let the pictures suffice for Tangier, and to choose for the text one road and one city. For if the truth be told there is little more than a single path to all the goals that the undisguised European may reach.

Morocco does not change save by compulsion, and there is no area of European influence below Tangier. Knowing one highway well you know something of all; consequently whether Fez, Mequinez, Wazzan, or Marrakesh be the objective, the travel story does not vary greatly. But to-day, Marrakusha-al-Hamra, Red

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Marrakesh, is the most African of all cities in Morocco, and seemed therefore best suited to the purpose of this book. Moreover, at the time when this journey was made, Bu Hamara was holding the approaches to Fez, and neither Mequinez nor Wazzan was in a mood to receive strangers.

So it falls out that the record of some two or three hundred miles of inland travel is all that awaits the reader here. In time to come, when Morocco has been purged of its offences of simplicity and primitiveness, the tourist shall accomplish in forty-eight hours the journey that demanded more than a month of last year's spring. For Sunset Land has no railway lines, nor can it boast —beyond the narrow limits of Tangier—telegraphs, telephones, electric light, modern hotels, or any of the other delights upon which the pampered traveller depends. It is as a primeval forest in the hour before the dawn. When the sun of France penetrates pacifically to all its hidden places, the forest will wake to a new life. Strange birds of bright plumage, called in Europe *gens d'armes*, will displace the storks upon the battlements of its ancient towns, the *commis voyageur* will appear where wild boar and hyæna now travel in comparative peace, the wild cat (*felis Throgmortonensis*) will arise from all mineralised districts. Arab and Berber will disappear slowly from the Moroccan forest as the lions have done before them, and in the place of their *douars* and *ksor* there shall be a multitude of small towns laid out with mathematical precision, reached by rail, afflicted with modern improvements, and partly filled

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with Frenchmen who strive to drown in the café their sorrow at being so far away from home. The real Morocco is so lacking in all the conveniences that would commend it to wealthy travellers that the writer feels some apology is due for the appearance of his short story of an almost unknown country in so fine a setting. Surely a simple tale of Sunset Land was never seen in such splendid guise before, and will not be seen again until, with past redeemed and forgotten, future assured, and civilisation modernised, Morocco ceases to be what it is to-day.

S. L. BENSUSAN.

July 1904.

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BY CAPE SPARTEL

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A SHEPHERD, CAPE SPARTEL

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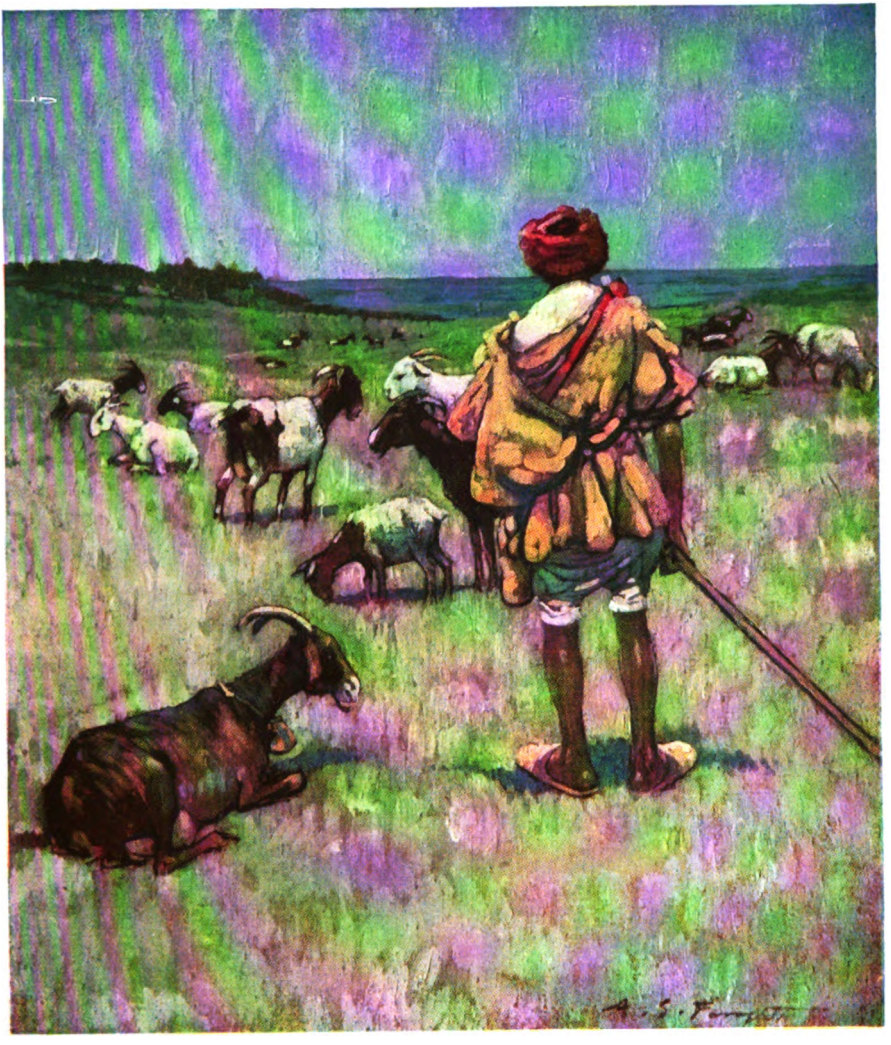

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CHAPTER I

BY CAPE SPARTEL

Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song,
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The Deserted Garden.

BEFORE us the Atlantic rolls to the verge of the "tideless, dolorous inland sea." In the little bay lying between Morocco's solitary lighthouse and the famous Caves of Spartel, the waters shine in colours that recall in turn the emerald, the sapphire, and the opal. There is just enough breeze to raise a fine spray as the baby waves reach the rocks, and to fill the sails of one or two tiny vessels speeding toward the coast of Spain. There is just enough sun to warm the water in the pools to a point that makes bathing the most desirable mid-day pastime, and over land and sea a solemn sense of peace is brooding. From where the tents are set no other human habitation is in sight. A great spur of rock, with the green and scarlet of cactus sprawling over it at will, shuts off lighthouse and telegraph station, while

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the towering hills above hide the village of Mediunah, whence our supplies are brought each day at dawn and sun-setting.

Two fishermen, clinging to the steep side of the rock, cast their lines into the water. They are from the hills, and as far removed from our twentieth century as their prototypes who were fishing in the sparkling blue not so very far away when, the world being young, Theocritus passed and gave them immortality. In the valley to the right, the atmosphere of the Sicilian Idylls is preserved by two half-clad goatherds who have brought their flock to pasture from hill-side Mediunah, in whose pens they are kept safe from thieves at night. As though he were a reincarnation of Daphnis or Menalcas, one of the brown-skinned boys leans over a little promontory and plays a tuneless ghaitah, while his companion, a younger lad, gives his eyes to the flock and his ears to the music. The last rains of this favoured land's brief winter have passed; beyond the plateau the sun has called flowers to life in every nook and cranny. Soon the light will grow too strong and blinding, the flowers will fade beneath it, the shepherds will seek the shade, but in these glad March days there is no suggestion of the intolerable heat to come.

On the plot of level ground that Nature herself has set in position for a camp, the tents are pitched. Two hold the impedimenta of travel; in the third Salam and his assistant work in leisurely fashion, as befits the time and place. Tangier lies no more than

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THE COURT-YARD OF THE LIGHTHOUSE, CAPE SPARTEL

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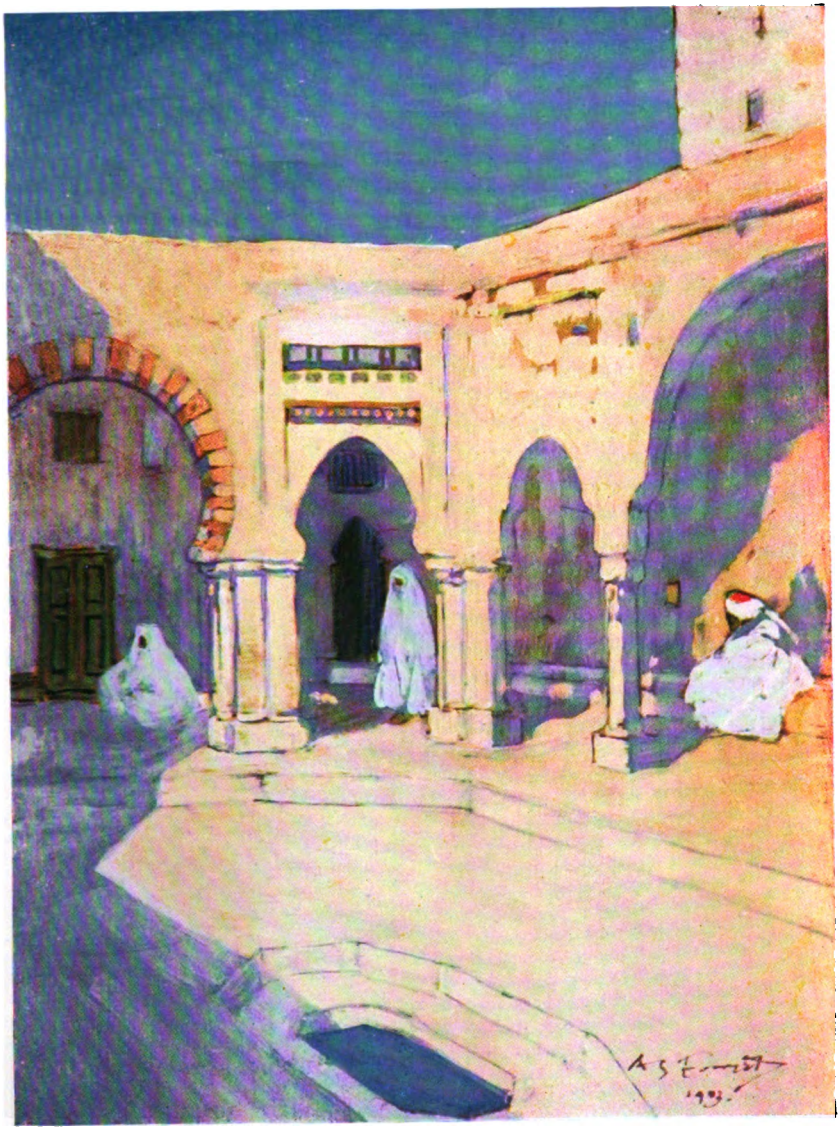

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twelve miles away, over a road that must be deemed uncommonly good for Morocco, but I have chosen to live in camp for a week or two in this remote place, in preparation for a journey to the southern country. At first the tents were the cynosure of native eyes. Mediunah came down from its fastness among the hilltops to investigate discreetly from secure corners, prepared for flight so soon as occasion demanded it, if not before. Happily Salam's keen glance pierced the cover of the advance-guard and reassured one and all. Confidence established, the village agreed after much solemn debate to supply eggs, chickens, milk, and vegetables at prices doubtless in excess of those prevailing in the country markets, but quite low enough for Europeans.

This little corner of the world, close to the meeting of the Atlantic and Mediterranean waters, epitomises in its own quiet fashion the story of the land's decay. Now it is a place of wild bees and wilder birds, of flowers and bushes that live fragrant untended lives, seen by few and appreciated by none. It is a spot so far removed from human care that I have seen, a few yards from the tents, fresh tracks made by the wild boar as he has rooted o' nights; and once, as I sat looking out over the water when the rest of the camp was asleep, a dark shadow passed, not fifty yards distant, going head to wind up the hill, and I knew it for "tusker" wending his way to the village gardens, where the maize was green.

Yet the district has not always been solitary.

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Where now the tents are pitched, there was an orange grove in the days when Mulai Abd er Rahman ruled at Fez and Marrakesh, and then Mediunah boasted quite a thriving connection with the coasts of Portugal and Spain. The little bay wherein one is accustomed to swim or plash about at noonday, then sheltered furtive sailing-boats from the sleepy eyes of Moorish authority, and a profitable smuggling connection was maintained with the Spanish villages between Algeciras and Tarifa Point. Beyond the rocky caverns, where patient countrymen still quarry for millstones, a bare coast-line leads to the spot where legend places the Gardens of the Hesperides; indeed, the millstone quarries are said to be the original Caves of Hercules, and the golden fruit the hero won flourished, we are assured, not far away. Small wonder then that the place has an indefinable quality of enchantment that even the twentieth century cannot quite efface.

Life in camp is exquisitely simple. We rise with the sun. If in the raw morning hours a donkey brays, the men are very much perturbed, for they know that the poor beast has seen a djin. They will remain ill-at-ease until, somewhere in the heights where Mediunah is preparing for another day, a cock crows. This is a satisfactory omen, atoning for the donkey's performance. A cock only crows when he sees an angel, and, if there are angels abroad, the ill intentions of the djinoon will be upset. When I was travelling in the country some few years ago, it chanced one night

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A STREET, TANGIER

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that the heavens were full of shooting stars. My camp attendants ceased work at once. Satan and all his host were assailing Paradise, they said, and we were spectators of heaven's artillery making counter-attack upon the djinoon.[1] The wandering meteors passed, the fixed stars shone out with such a splendour as we may not hope to see in these western islands, and the followers of the great Camel Driver gave thanks and praise to His Master Allah, who had conquered the powers of darkness once again.

While I enjoy a morning stroll over the hills, or a plunge in the sea, Salam, squatting at the edge of the cooking tent behind two small charcoal fires, prepares the breakfast. He has the true wayfarer's gift that enables a man to cook his food in defiance of wind or weather. Some wisps of straw and charcoal are arranged in a little hole scooped out of the ground, a match is struck, the bellows are called into play, and the fire is an accomplished fact. The kettle sings as cheerfully as the cicadas in the tree tops, eggs are made into what Salam calls a "marmalade," in spite of my oft-repeated assurance that he means omelette, porridge is cooked and served with new milk that has been carefully strained and boiled. For bread we have the flat brown loaves of Mediunah, and they are better than they look—ill-made indeed, but vastly more nutritious than the pretty emasculated products of our modern bakeries.

[1] "Moreover, we have decked the lower heaven with lamps, and have made them for pelting the devils."—Al Koran; Sura, "The Kingdom."

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Bargain and sale are concluded before the morning walk is over. The village folk send a deputation carrying baskets of eggs and charcoal, with earthen jars of milk or butter, fresh vegetables, and live chickens. I stayed one morning to watch the procedure.

The eldest of the party, a woman who seems to be eighty and is probably still on the sunny side of fifty, comes slowly forward to where Salam sits aloof, dignified and difficult to approach. He has been watching her out of one corner of an eye, but feigns to be quite unconscious of her presence. He and she know that we want supplies and must have them from the village, but the facts of the case have nothing to do with the conventions of trading in Sunset Land.

"The Peace of the Prophet on all True Believers. I have brought food from Mediunah," says the elderly advance-guard, by way of opening the campaign.

"Allah is indeed merciful, O my Aunt," responds Salam with lofty irrelevance. Then follows a prolonged pause, somewhat trying, I apprehend, to Aunt, and struggling with a yawn Salam says at length, "I will see what you would sell."

She beckons the others, and they lay their goods at our steward's feet. Salam turns his head away meanwhile, and looks out across the Atlantic as though anxious to assure himself about the state of agriculture in Spain. At last he wheels about, and with a rapid glance full of contempt surveys the village produce. He has a cheapening eye.

"How much?" he asks sternly.

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IN TANGIER

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Item by item the old dame prices the goods. The little group of young married women, with babies tied in a bundle behind them, or half-naked children clinging to their loin-cloths, nods approval. But Salam's face is a study. In place of contemptuous indifference there is now rising anger, terrible to behold. His brows are knitted, his eyes flame, his beard seems to bristle with rage. The tale of prices is hardly told before, with a series of rapid movements, he has tied every bundle up, and is thrusting the good things back into the hands of their owners. His vocabulary is strained to its fullest extent; he stands up, and with outspread hands denounces Mediunah and all its ways. The men of the village are cowards; the women have no shame. Their parents were outcasts. They have no fear of the Prophet who bade True Believers deal fairly with the stranger within their gates. In a year at most, perhaps sooner, "Our Master the Sultan" will assuredly be among these people who shame Al Moghreb,[1] he will eat them up, dogs will make merry among their graves, and their souls will go down to the pit. In short, everything is too dear.

Only the little children are frightened by this outburst, which is no more than a prelude to bargaining. The women extol and Salam decries the goods on offer; both praise Allah. Salam assures them that the country of the "Ingliz" would be ruined if its inhabitants had to pay the prices they ask for such goods as they have to sell. He will see his master

[1] "The Far West," the native name for Morocco.

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starve by inches, he will urge him to return to Tangier and eat there at a fair price, before he will agree to sacrifices hitherto unheard of in Sunset Land. This bargaining proceeds for a quarter of an hour without intermission, and by then the natives have brought their prices down and Salam has brought his up. Finally the money is paid in Spanish pesetas or Moorish quarters, and carefully examined by the simple folk, who retire to their ancestral hills, once more praising Allah who sends custom. Salam, his task accomplished, complains that the villagers have robbed us shamefully, but a faint twinkle in his eye suggests that he means less than he says.

Breakfast over, I seek a hillside cave where there is a double gift of shade and a wonderful view, content to watch the pageantry of the morning hours and dream of hard work. Only the goatherds and their charges suggest that the district is inhabited, unless some vessel passing on its way to or from the southern coast can be seen communicating with the signal station round the bend of the rocks. There a kindly old Scot lives, with his Spanish wife and little children, in comparative isolation, from the beginning to the end of the year.

"I've almost forgotten my own tongue," he said to me one evening when he came down to the camp to smoke the pipe of peace and tell of the fur and feather that pass in winter time. It was on a day when a great flight of wild geese had been seen winging its way to the unknown South, and the procession had fired the sporting instinct in one of us at least.

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A STREET IN TANGIER

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Mid-day, or a little later, finds Salam in charge of a light meal, and, that discussed, one may idle in the shade until the sun is well on the way to the West. Then books and papers are laid aside. We set out for a tramp, or saddle the horses and ride for an hour or so in the direction of the mountain, an unexplored Riviera of bewildering and varied loveliness. The way lies through an avenue of cork trees, past which the great hills slope seaward, clothed with evergreen oak and heath, and a species of sundew, with here and there yellow broom, gum cistus, and an unfamiliar plant with blue flowers. Trees and shrubs fight for light and air, the fittest survive and thrive, sheltering little birds from the keen-eyed, quivering hawks above them. The road makes me think of what the French Mediterranean littoral must have been before it was dotted over with countless vulgar villas, covered with trees and shrubs that are not indigenous to the soil, and tortured into trim gardens that might have strayed from a prosperous suburb of London or Paris. Save a few charcoal burners, or stray women bent almost double beneath the load of wood they have gathered for some village on the hills, we see nobody. These evening rides are made into a country as deserted as the plateau that holds the camp, for the mountain houses of wealthy residents are half a dozen miles nearer Tangier.[1]

On other evenings the road chosen lies in the direction of the Caves of Hercules, where the samphire grows

[1] One of the most charming of these houses is "Aidonia," belonging to Mr. Ion Perdicaris. He was seized there by the brigand Rais Uli in May last.

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neglected, and wild ferns thrive in unexpected places. I remember once scaring noisy seabirds from what seemed to be a corpse, and how angrily the gorged, reluctant creatures rose from what proved to be the body of a stranded porpoise, that tainted the air for fifty yards around. On another evening a storm broke suddenly. Somewhere in the centre rose a sand column that seemed to tell, in its brief moment of existence, the secret of the origin of the djinoon that roam at will through Eastern legendary lore.

It is always necessary to keep a careful eye upon the sun during these excursions past the caves. The light fails with the rapidity associated with all the African countries, tropical and semi-tropical alike. A sudden sinking, as though the sun had fallen over the edge of the world, a brief after-glow, a change from gold to violet, and violet to grey, a chill in the air, and the night has fallen. Then there is a hurried scamper across sand, over rocks and past boulders, before the path that stretches in a faint fading line becomes wholly obliterated. In such a place as this one might wander for hours within a quarter of a mile of camp, and then only find the road by lucky accident, particularly if the senses have been blunted by very long residence in the heart of European civilisation.

I think that dinner brings the most enjoyable hour of the day. Work is over, the sights of sea and shore have been enjoyed, we have taken exercise in plenty. Salam and his helpers having dined, the kitchen tent becomes the scene of an animated conversation that

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A GUIDE, TANGIER

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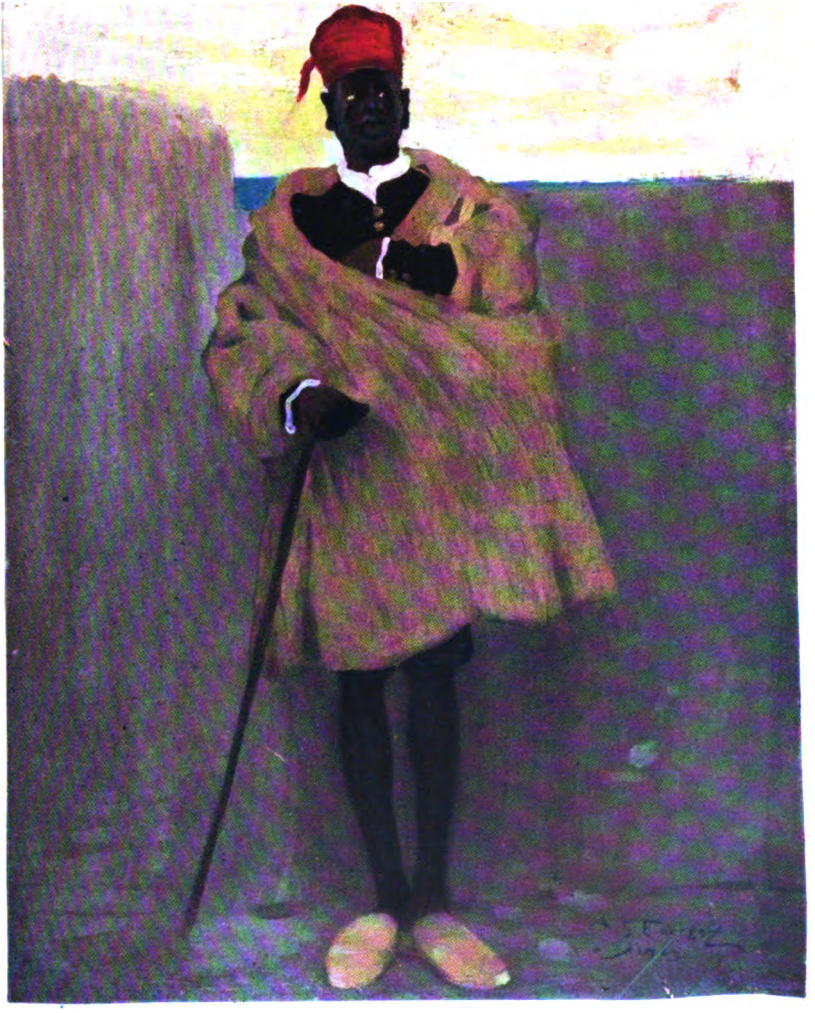

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one hears without understanding. Two or three old headmen, finding their way in the dark like cats, have come down from Mediunah to chat with Salam and the town Moor. The social instinct pervades Morocco. On the plains of R'hamna, where fandaks are unknown and even the n'zalas[1] are few and far between; in the fertile lands of Dukala, Shiadma, and Haha; in M'touga, on whose broad plains the finest Arab horses are reared and thrive,—I have found this instinct predominant. As soon as the evening meal is over, the headmen of the nearest village come to the edge of the tent, remove their slippers, praise God, and ask for news of the world without. It may be that they are going to rob the strangers in the price of food for mules and horses, or even over the tent supplies. It may be that they would cut the throats of all foreign wayfarers quite cheerfully, if the job could be accomplished without fear of reprisals. It is certain that they despise them for Unbelievers, *i.e.* Christians or Jews, condemned to the pit; but in spite of all considerations they must have news of the outer world.

When the moon comes out and the Great Bear constellation is shining above our heads as though its sole duty in heaven were to light the camp, there is a strong temptation to ramble. I am always sure that I can find the track, or that Salam will be within hail should it be lost. How quickly the tents pass out of sight. The path to the hills lies by way of little pools where the frogs have a croaking chorus that Aristophanes

[1] Shelters provided by the Government for travellers.

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might have envied. On the approach of strange footsteps they hurry off the flat rocks by the pool, and one hears a musical plash as they reach water. Very soon the silence is resumed, and presently becomes so oppressive that it is a relief to turn again and see our modest lights twinkling as though in welcome.

It is hopeless to wait for wild boar now. One or two pariah dogs, hailing from nowhere, have been attracted to the camp, Salam has given them the waste food, and they have installed themselves as our protectors, whether out of a feeling of gratitude or in hope of favours to come I cannot tell, but probably from a mixture of wise motives. They are alert, savage beasts, of a hopelessly mixed breed, but no wild boar will come rooting near the camp now, nor will any thief, however light-footed, yield to the temptation our tents afford.

We have but one visitor after the last curtain has been drawn, a strange bird with a harsh yet melancholy note, that reminds me of the night-jar of the fen lands in our own country. The hills make a semicircle round the camp, and the visitor seems to arrive at the corner nearest Spartel about one o'clock in the morning. It cries persistently awhile, and then flies to the middle of the semicircle, just at the back of the tents, where the note is very weird and distinct. Finally it goes to the other horn of the crescent and resumes the call—this time, happily, a much more subdued affair. What is it? Why does it come to complain to the silence night after night? One of the men says it is a djin, and wants to go back to Tangier, but Salam, whose loyalty outweighs

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THE ROAD TO THE KASBAH, TANGIER

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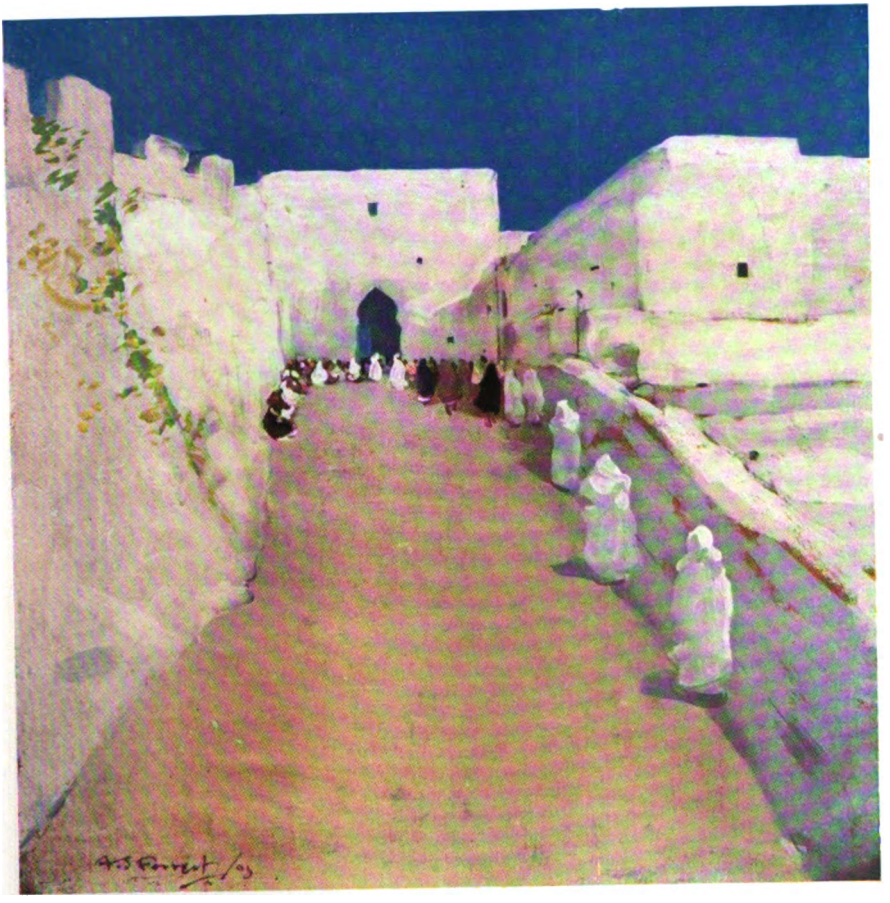

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his fears, declares that even though it be indeed a devil and eager to devour us, it cannot come within the charmed range of my revolver. Hence its regret, expressed so unpleasantly. I have had to confess to Salam that I have no proof that he is wrong.

Now and again in the afternoon the tribesmen call to one another from the hill tops. They possess an extraordinary power of carrying their voices over a space that no European could span. I wonder whether the real secret of the powers ascribed to the half-civilised tribes of Africa has its origin in this gift. Certain it is that news passes from village to village across the hills, and that no courier can keep pace with it. In this way rumours of great events travel from one end of the Dark Continent to the other, and if the tales told me of the passage of news from South to North Africa during the recent war were not so extravagant as they seem at first hearing, I would set them down here, well assured that they would startle if they could not convince. In the south of Morocco, during the latter days of my journey, men spoke with quiet conviction of the doings of Sultan and Pretender in the North, just as though Morocco possessed a train or telegraph service, or a native newspaper. It does not seem unreasonable that, while the deserts and great rolling plains have extended men's vision to a point quite outside the comprehension of Europe, other senses may be at least equally stimulated by a life we Europeans shall never know intimately. Perhaps the fear of believing too readily makes us unduly sceptical,

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and inclined to forget that our philosophy cannot compass one of the many mysteries that lie at our door.

If any proof were required that Morocco in all its internal disputes is strictly tribal, our safe residence here would supply one. On the other side of Tangier, over in the direction of Tetuan, the tribes are out and the roads are impassable. Europeans are forbidden to ride by way of Angera to Tetuan. Even a Minister, the representative of a great European Power, was warned by old Hadj Mohammed Torres, the resident Secretary for Foreign Affairs, that the Moorish Administration would not hold itself responsible for his safety if he persisted in his intention to go hunting among the hills. And here we remain unmolested day after day, while the headmen of the Mediunah tribe discuss with perfect tranquillity the future of the Pretender's rebellion, or allude cheerfully to the time when, the Jehad (Holy War) being proclaimed, the Moslems will be permitted to cut the throats of all the Unbelievers who trouble the Moghreb. In the fatalism of our neighbours lies our safety. If Allah so wills, never a Nazarene will escape the more painful road to eternal fire; if it is written otherwise, Nazarene torment will be posthumous. They do not know, nor, in times when the land is preparing for early harvest, do they greatly care, what or when the end may be. Your wise Moor waits to gather in his corn and see it safely hoarded in the clay-lined and covered pits called mat'moras. That work over, he is ready and willing, nay, he is even anxious, to fight, and if no cause of quarrel is to be found he will make one.

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HEAD OF A BOY FROM MEDIUNA

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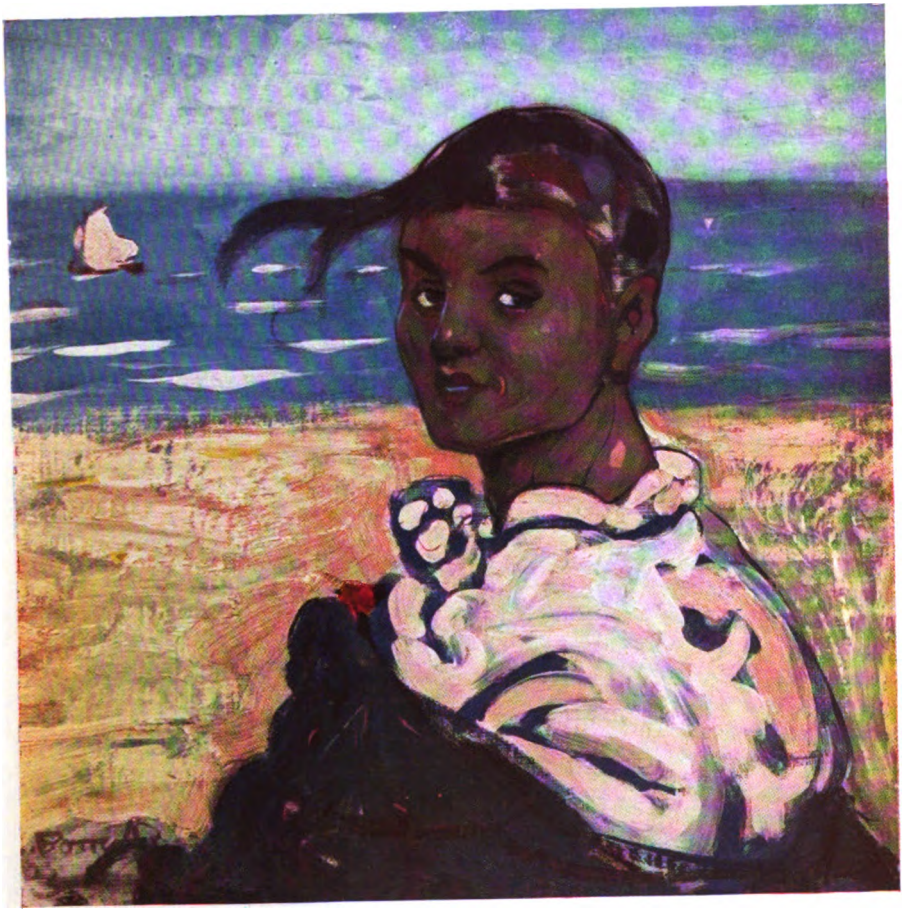

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By Cape Spartel

Every year or two a party of travellers settles on this plateau, says the headman of Mediunah. From him I hear of a fellow writer from England who was camped here six years ago.[1] Travellers stay sometimes for three or four days, sometimes for as many weeks, and he has been told by men who have come many miles from distant markets, that the Nazarenes are to be found here and there throughout the Moroccan highlands towards the close of the season of the winter rains. Clearly their own land is not a very desirable abiding place, or they have sinned against the law, or their Sultan has confiscated their worldly goods, remarks the headman. My suggestion that other causes than these may have been at work, yields no more than an assertion that all things are possible, if Allah wills them. It is his polite method of expressing reluctance to believe everything he is told.

From time to time, when we are taking our meals in the open air, I see the shepherd boys staring at us from a respectful distance. To them we must seem no better than savages. In the first place, we sit on chairs and not on the ground. We cut our bread, which, as every True Believer knows, is a wicked act and defies Providence, since bread is from Allah and may be broken with the hand but never touched with a knife. Then we do not know how to eat with our fingers, but use knives and forks and spoons that, after mere washing, are common property. We do not have water poured

[1] A. J. Dawson, whose novels dealing with Morocco are full of rare charm and distinction.

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out over our fingers before the meal begins,—the preliminary wash in the tent is invisible and does not count,—and we do not say "Bismillah" before we start eating. We are just heathens, they must say to themselves. Our daily bathing seems to puzzle them greatly. I do not notice that little Larbi or his brother Kasem ever tempt the sea to wash or drown them. Yet they look healthy enough, and are full of dignity. You may offer them fruit or sweetmeats or anything tempting that may be on the table, and they will refuse it. I fancy they regard the invitation to partake of Nazarene's food as a piece of impertinence, only excusable because Nazarenes are mad.

The days slip away from the plateau below Mediunah. March has yielded place to April. To-morrow the pack-mules will be here at sunrise. In the afternoon, when the cool hours approach, camp will be struck, and we shall ride down the avenue of cork trees for the last time on the way to "Tanjah of the Nazarenes," whence, at the week end, the boat will carry us to some Atlantic port, there to begin a longer journey.

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THE GOATHERD FROM MEDIUNA

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FROM TANGIER TO DJEDIDA

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OLD BUILDINGS, TANGIER

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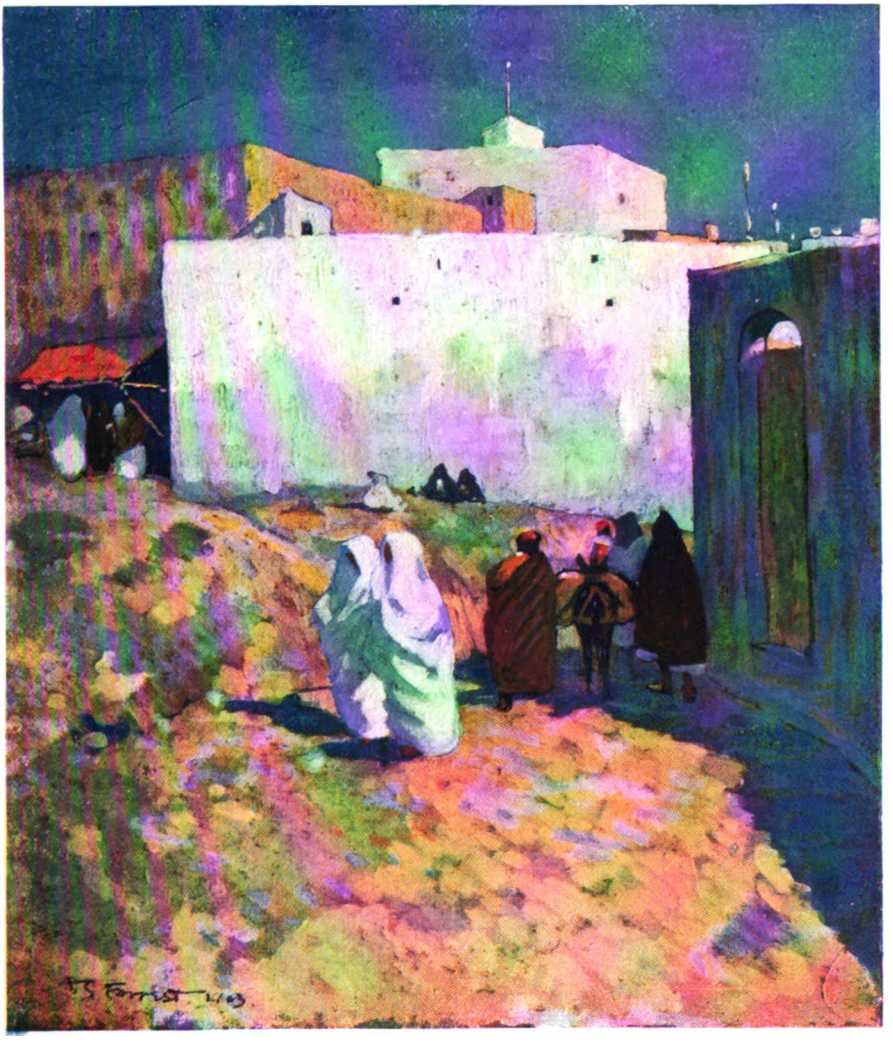

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CHAPTER II

FROM TANGIER TO DJEDIDA

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
. . . . . .
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.
The Canterbury Tales.

We have rounded the north-west corner of Africa, exchanged farewell signals with our friend on Lloyd's station,—who must now return to his Spanish and Arabic or live a silent life,—and I have taken a last look through field-glasses at the plateau that held our little camp. Since then we have raced the light for a glimpse of El Araish, where the Gardens of the Hesperides were set by people of old time. The sun was too swift in its decline; one caught little more than an outline of the white city, with the minarets of its mosques that seemed to pierce the sky, and flags flying in the breeze on the flat roofs of its Consuls' houses. The river Lekkus showed up whitely on the eastern side, a rising wind having whipped its waters into foam, and driven the light coasting vessels out to sea. So much I saw from the good ship *Zweena's* upper deck, and then evening fell,

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as though to hide from me the secret of the gardens where the Golden Apples grew.

Alas, that modern knowledge should have destroyed all faith in old legend! The fabled fruits of the Hesperides turn to oranges in the hands of our wise men, the death-dealing dragon becomes Wad Lekkus itself, so ready even to-day to snarl and roar at the bidding of the wind that comes up out of the south-west, and the dusky maidens of surpassing loveliness are no more than simple Berber girls, who, whilst doubtless dusky, and possibly maidenly as ever, have not inherited much of the storied beauty of their forbears. In spite of this modern perversion of the old tale I find that the oranges of the dining-table have a quite rare charm for me to-night,—such an attraction as they have had hitherto only when I have picked them in the gardens of Andalusia, or in the groves that perfume the ancient town of Jaffa at the far eastern end of the Mediterranean. Now I have one more impression to cherish, and the scent of a blossoming orange tree will recall for me El Araish as I saw it at the moment when the shroud of evening made the mosques and the kasbah of Mulai al Yazeed melt, with the great white spaces between them, into a blurred pearly mass without salient feature.

You shall still enjoy the sense of being in touch with past times and forgotten people, if you will walk the deck of a ship late at night. Your fellow-passengers are abed, the watch, if watch there be, is invisible, the steady throbbing movement of the screw

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MOORISH HOUSE, CAPE SPARTEL

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resolves itself into a pleasing rhythmic melody. So far as the senses can tell, the world is your closet, a silent pleasaunce for your waking dreams. The coast-line has no lights, nor is any other vessel passing over the waters within range of eye or glass. The hosts of heaven beam down upon a silent universe in which you are the only waking soul. On a sudden eight bells rings out sharply from the forecastle head, and you spring back from your world of fancy as hurriedly as Cinderella returned to her rags when long-shore midnight chimed. The officer of the middle watch and a hand for the wheel come aft to relieve their companions, the illusion has passed, and you go below to turn in, feeling uncomfortably sure that your pretty thoughts will appear foolish and commonplace enough when regarded in the matter-of-fact light of the coming day.

Dár el Baida, most Moorish of seaports, received us in the early morning. The wind had fallen, and the heavy surf-boats of the port could land us easily. We went on shore past the water-gate and the custom-house that stands on the site of the stores erected by the society of the Gremios Majores when Charles V. ruled Spain. Dár el Baida seemed to have straggled over as much ground as Tangier, but the ground itself was flat and full of refuse. The streets were muddy and unpaved, cobble stones strove ineffectually to disguise drains, and one felt that the sea breezes alone stood between the city and some such virulent epidemic as that which smote Tangier less than ten years ago. But withal there was a certain picturesque quality about

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Dár el Baida that atoned for more obvious faults, and the market-place afforded a picture as Eastern in its main features as the tired Western eye could seek. Camel caravans had come in from the interior for the Monday market. They had tramped from the villages of the Zair and the Beni Hassan tribes, bringing ripe barley for sale, though the spring months had not yet passed. From places near at hand the husbandmen had brought all the vegetables that flourish after the March rains,—peas and beans and lettuces; pumpkins, carrots and turnips, and the tender leaves of the date-palm. The first fruits of the year and the dried roses of a forgotten season were sold by weight, and charcoal was set in tiny piles at prices within the reach of the poorest customers.

Wealthy merchants had brought their horses within the shadow of the sok's[1] high walls and loosened the many-clothed saddles. Slaves walked behind their masters or trafficked on their behalf. The snake-charmer, the story-teller, the beggar, the water-carrier, the incense seller, whose task in life is to fumigate True Believers, all who go to make the typical Moorish crowd, were to be seen indolently plying their trade. But inquiries for mules, horses, and servants for the inland journey met with no ready response. Dár el Baida, I was assured, had nothing to offer; Djedida, lower down along the coast, might serve, or Saffi, if Allah should send weather of a sort that would permit the boat to land.

[1] The sok is the market-place.

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A PATRIARCH

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As it happened, Djedida was the steamer's next port of call, so we made haste to return to her hospitable decks. I carried with me a vivid impression of Dár el Baida, of the market-place with its varied goods, and yet more varied people, the white Arabs, the darker Berbers, the black slaves from the Soudan and the Draa. Noticeable in the market were the sweet stores, where every man sat behind his goods armed with a feather brush, and waged ceaseless war with the flies, while a corner of his eye was kept for small boys, who were well nigh as dangerous. I remember the gardens, one particularly well. It belongs to the French Consul, and has bananas growing on the trees that face the road; from beyond the hedge one caught delightful glimpses of colour and faint breaths of exquisite perfume.

I remember, too, the covered shed containing the mill that grinds the flour for the town, and the curious little bakehouse to which Dár el Baida takes its flat loaves, giving the master of the establishment one loaf in ten by way of payment. I recall the sale of horses, at which a fine raking mare with her foal at foot fetched fifty-four dollars in Moorish silver, a sum less than nine English pounds.

And I seem to see, even now as I write, the Spanish woman with cruel painted face, sitting at the open casement of an old house near the Spanish church, thrumming her guitar, and beneath her, by the roadside, a beggar clad, like the patriarch of old, in a garment of many colours, that made his black face seem blacker than any I have seen in Africa. Then Dár el Baida

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sinks behind the water-port gate, the strong Moorish rowers bend to their oars, their boat laps through the dark-blue water, and we are back aboard the ship again, in another atmosphere, another world. Passengers are talking as it might be they had just returned from their first visit to a Zoological Garden. Most of them have seen no more than the dirt and ugliness—their vision noted no other aspect—of the old-world port. The life that has not altered for centuries, the things that make it worth living to all the folk we leave behind,—these are matters in which casual visitors to Morocco have no concern. They resent suggestion that the affairs of "niggers" can call for serious consideration, far less for appreciation or interest of any sort.

Happily Djedida is not far away. At daybreak we are securely anchored before the town whose possession by the Portuguese is recorded to this hour by the fine fortifications and walls round the port. We slip over the smooth water in haste, that we may land before the sun is too high in the heavens. It is not without a thrill of pleasure that I hear the ship's shrill summons and see the rest of the passengers returning.

By this time it is afternoon, but the intervening hours have not been wasted. I have found the Maalem, master of a bakehouse, a short, olive-skinned, wild, and wiry little man, whose yellowed eyes and contracting pupils tell a tale of haschisch and kief that his twitching fingers confirm. But he knows the great track stretching some hundred and twenty miles into the interior up to

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PILGRIMS ON A STEAMER

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Red Marrakesh; he is "the father and mother" of mules and horses, animals that brighten the face of man by reason of their superlative qualities, and he is prepared to undertake the charge of all matters pertaining to a journey over this roadless country. His beasts are fit to journey to Tindouf in the country of the Draa, so fine is their condition; their saddles and accoutrements would delight the Sultan's own ministers. By Allah, the inland journey will be a picnic! Quite gravely, I have professed to believe all he says, and my reservations, though many, are all mental.

In the days that precede departure — and in Morocco they are always apt to be numerous — I seek to enter into the life of Djedida. Sometimes we stroll to the custom-house, where grave and dignified Moors sit in the bare, barnlike office that opens upon the waste ground beyond the port. There they deliver my shot guns after long and dubious scrutiny of the order from the British Consulate at Tangier. They also pass certain boxes of stores upon production of a certificate testifying that they paid duty on arrival at the Diplomatic Capital. These matters, trivial enough to the Western mind, are of weight and moment here, not to be settled lightly or without much consultation.

Rotting in the stores of this same custom-house are two grand pianos and an electric omnibus. The Sultan ordered them, the country paid for them,—so much was achieved by the commercial energy of the infidel,—and native energy sufficed to land them; it was exhausted by the effort. If Mulai Abd-el-Aziz wants

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his dearly purchased treasure, the ordering and existence of which he has probably forgotten, he must come to Mazagan for it, I am afraid, and unless he makes haste it will not be worth much. But there are many more such shipments in other ports, not to mention the unopened and forgotten packing cases at Court.

The Basha of Djedida is a little old man, very rich indeed, and the terror of the entire Dukala province. I like to watch him as he sits day by day under the wall of the Kasbah by the side of his own palace, administering what he is pleased to call justice. Soldiers and slaves stand by to enforce his decree if need be, plaintiff and defendant lie like tombstones or advertisements of patent medicines, or telegrams from the seat of war, but no sign of an emotion lights the old man's face. He tempers justice with—let us say, diplomacy. The other afternoon a French-protected subject was charged with sheep-stealing, and I went to the trial. Salam acted as interpreter for me. The case was simple enough. The defendant had received some hundred sheep from plaintiff to feed and tend at an agreed price. From time to time he sent plaintiff the sad news of the death of certain rams, always among the finest in the flock. Plaintiff, a farmer in good circumstances, testified to the Unity of Allah and was content to pray for better luck, until news was brought to him that most of the sheep reported dead were to be seen in the Friday market fetching good prices. The news proved true, the report of their death was no more than the defendant's intelligent anticipation of events, and the

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THE HOUR OF SALE

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action arose out of it. To be sure, the plaintiff had presented a fine sheep to the Basha, but the defendant was a French subject by protection, and the Vice-Consul of his adopted nation was there to see fair play. Under these circumstances the defendant lied with an assurance that must have helped to convince himself; his friends arrived in the full number required by the law, and testified with cheerful mendacity in their companion's favour. The Basha listened with attention while the litigants swore strange oaths and abused each other very thoroughly. Then he silenced both parties with a word, and gave judgment for the defendant. There was no appeal, though, had the defendant been an unprotected subject, the plaintiff's knife had assuredly entered into the final settlement of this little matter. But the plaintiff knew that an attack upon a French protégé would lead to his own indefinite imprisonment and occasional torture, to the confiscation of his goods, and to sundry other penalties that may be left unrecorded, as they would not look well in cold print. He knew, moreover, that everything is predestined, that no man may avoid Allah's decree. These matters of faith are real, not pale abstractions, in Morocco. So he was less discontented with the decision than one of his European brethren would have been in similar case—and far more philosophic regarding it.

Quite slowly we completed our outfit for the inland journey. Heaven aid the misguided Nazarene who seeks to accomplish such matters swiftly in this land of eternal afternoon. I bought an extraordinary

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assortment of what our American friends call "dry-goods" in the Jewish stores, from the very business-like gentlemen in charge of them. These all wore black gaberdines, black slippers, stockings that were once white, and black skull-caps over suspiciously shining love-locks. Most of the Jewish men seemed to have had smallpox; in their speech they relied upon a very base Arabic, together with worse Spanish or quite barbarous French. Djedida having no Mellah, as the Moorish ghetto is called, they were free to trade all over the town, and for rather less than a pound sterling I bought quite an imposing collection of cutlery, plate, and dishes for use on the road. It is true, as I discovered subsequently, that the spoons and forks might be crushed out of shape with one hand, that the knives would cut nothing rougher than Danish butter, and were imported from Germany with a Sheffield mark on them to deceive the natives, and that the plates and dishes were not too good to go with the cutlery. But nothing had been bought without bargaining of a more or less exciting and interesting sort, and for the bargaining no extra charge whatever was made. The little box-like shops, with flaps that served as shutters, were ill-adapted for private purchase; there was no room for more than the owner inside, and before we had been at one for five minutes the roadway became impassable. All the idlers and beggars in that district gathered to watch the strangers, and the Maalem was the only one who could keep them at bay. Salam

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EVENING, MAZAGAN

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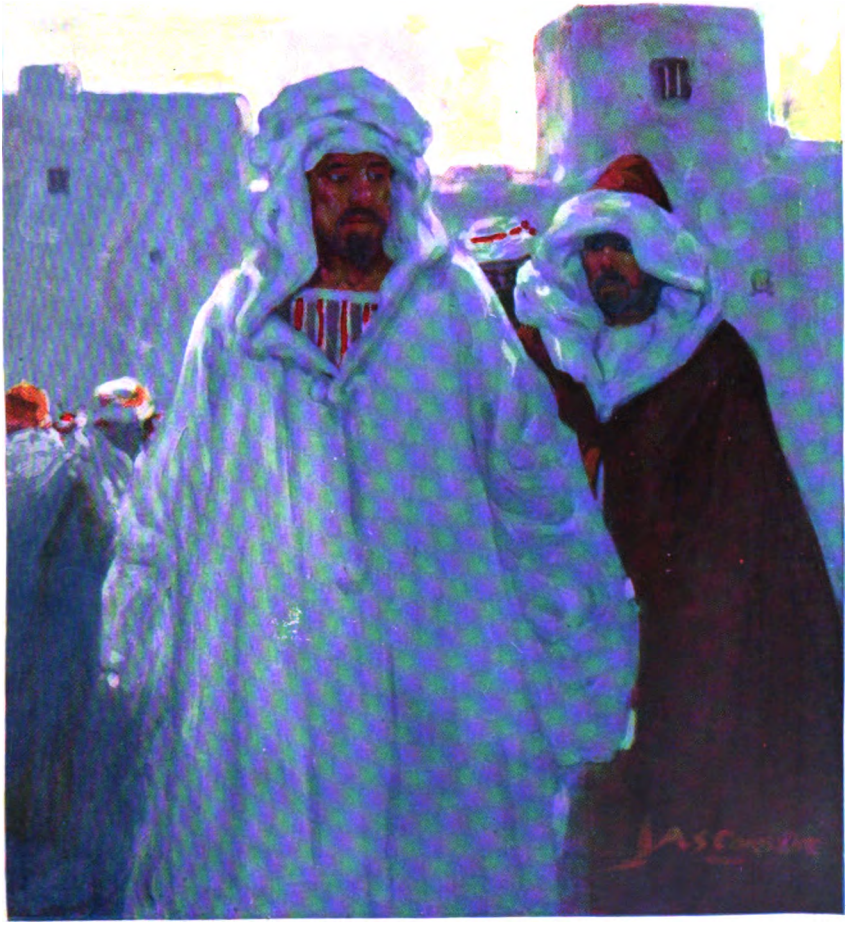

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would merely threaten to cuff an importunate rogue who pestered us, but the Maalem would curse him so fluently and comprehensively, and extend the anathema so far in either direction, from forgotten ancestors to unborn descendants, that no native could stand up for long against the flashing eye, the quivering forefinger, the foul and bitter tongue of him. There were times, then and later on, when the Maalem seemed to be some Moorish connection of Captain Kettle's family, and after reflecting upon my experience among hard-swearing men of many nations, seafarers, land-sharks, beach-combers and the rest, I award the Maalem pride of place. You will find him to-day in Djedida, baking his bread with the aid of the small apprentice who looks after the shop when he goes abroad, or enjoying the dreams of the haschisch eater when his work is done. He is no man's enemy, and the penalty of his shortcomings will probably fall upon no body or soul save his own. A picturesque figure, passionate yet a philosopher, patiently tolerant of blinding heat, bad roads, uncomfortable sleeping quarters and short commons, the Maalem will remain alive and real in my memory long after the kaids and wazeers and other high dignitaries of his country are no more than dimly splendid shadows, lacking altogether in individuality.

I learned to enjoy Djedida by night. Then the town was almost as silent as our camp below Mediunah had been. The ramparts left by the Portuguese and the white walls of the city itself became all of a piece,

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indistinct and mysterious as the darkness blended them. Late camels coming into the town to seek the security of some fandak would pad noiselessly past me; weird creatures from the under-world they seemed, on whom the ghostlike Arabs in their white djellabas were ordered to attend. Children would flit to and fro like shadows, strangely quiet, as though held in thrall even in the season of their play by the solemn aspect of the surroundings. The market-place and road to the landing-stage would be deserted, the gates of the city barred, and there was never a light to be seen save where some wealthy Moor attended by lantern-bearing slaves passed to and from his house. One night by the Kasbah the voice of a watchman broke upon the city's silence, at a time when the mueddin was at rest, and it was not incumbent upon the faithful to pray. "Be vigilant, O guardians," he cried,—"be vigilant and do not sleep." Below, by my side, on the ground, the guardians, wrapped warm in their djellabas, dreamed on, all undisturbed.

By night, too, the pariah dogs, scavengers of all Mohammedan cities, roamed at their ease and leisure through Djedida, so hungry and so free from daintiness that no garbage would be left on the morrow. Moorish houses have no windows fronting the road—decency forbids, and though there might have been ample light within, the bare walls helped to darken the pathway, and it was wise to walk warily lest one should tumble over some beggar asleep on the ground.

On nights like these and through streets not greatly

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SUNSET OFF THE COAST

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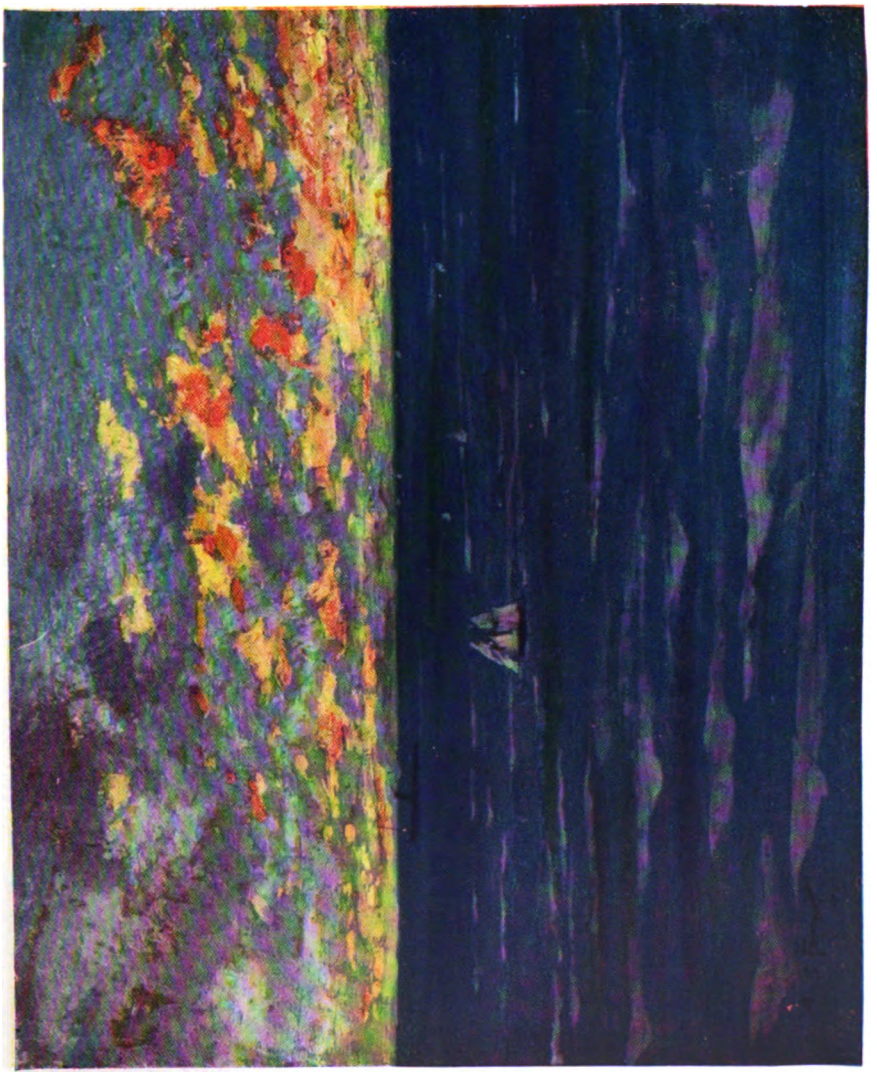

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different, Harun al Raschid fared abroad in Baghdad and lighted upon the wonderful folk who live for all time in the pages of the *Arabian Nights*. Doubtless I passed some twentieth-century descendants of the fisher-folk, the Calendars, the slaves, and the merchants who move in their wonderful pageantry along the glittering road of the "Thousand Nights and a Night,"—the type is marvellously unchanging in Al Moghreb; but, alas, they spoke, if at all, to deaf ears, and Salam was ever more anxious to see me safely home than to set out in search of adventure. By day I knew that Djedida had little of the charm associated even in this year of grace with the famous city on the Tigris, but, all over the world that proclaims the inspiration of Mohammed, the old times come back by night, and then "a thousand years are but as yesterday."

Happily we were right below the area of rebellion. In the north, round Fez and Taza, there was severe fighting, spreading thence to the Riff country. Here, people did no more than curse the Pretender in public or the Sultan in private, according to the state of their personal feelings. Communication with the south, said the Maalem, was uninterrupted; only in the north were the sons of the Illegitimate, the rebels against Allah, troubling Our Lord the Sultan. From Djedida down to the Atlas the tribes were peaceful, and would remain at rest unless Our Master should attempt to collect his taxes, in which case, without doubt, there would be trouble.

He was a busy man in these days, was the Maalem.

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When he was not baking bread or smoking kief he was securing mules and bringing them for our inspection. To Mr. T. Spinney, son of the British Vice-Consul in Mazagan, we owed our salvation. A master of Moghrebbin Arabic, on intimate terms with the Moors, and thoroughly conversant with the road and its requirements, he stood between me and the fiery-tongued Maalem. This mule was rejected, that saddle was returned, stirrups tied with string were disqualified, the little man's claim to have all "the money in the hand" was overruled, and the Maalem, red-hot sputtering iron in my hands, was as wax in Mr. Spinney's. My good friend and host also found Kaid M'Barak,[1] the soldier, a tall, scorched, imperturbable warrior, who rode a brave horse, and carried a gun done up in a very tattered, old, flannel case tied with half a dozen pieces of string. The kaid's business was to strike terror into the hearts of evil men in return for a Moorish dollar a day, and to help with tent setting and striking, or anything else that might be required, in return for his food. He was a lean, gaunt, taciturn man, to whom twelve hours in the saddle brought no discomfort, and though he strove earnestly to rob me, it was only at the journey's end, when he had done his work faithfully and well. His gun seemed to be a constant source of danger to somebody, for he carried it at right angles to his horse across the saddle, and often on the road I would start to consciousness that

[1] Kaid is a complimentary title—he was a common soldier. M'Barak means "the blessed one," and is one of the names usually set apart for slaves.

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A VERANDAH AT MAZAGAN

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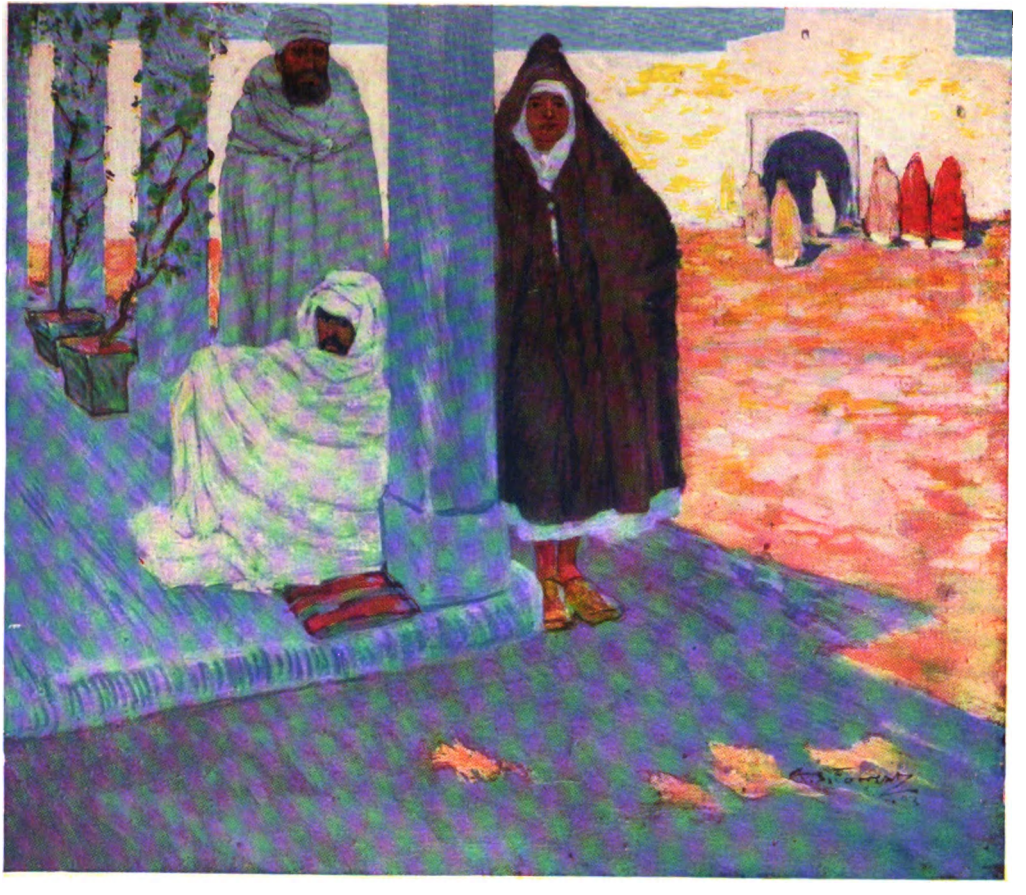

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the kaid was covering me with his be-frocked weapon. After a time one grew accustomed and indifferent to the danger, but when I went shooting in the Argan forest I left the blessed one in camp. He was convinced that he carried his gun in proper fashion, and that his duty was well done. And really he may have been right, for upon a day, when a hint of possible danger threatened, I learned to my amusement and relief that the valiant man carried no ammunition of any sort, and that the barrel of his gun was stuffed full of red calico.

Our inland tramp over, he took one day's rest at Mogador, then gathered the well-earned store of dollars into his belt and started off to follow the coast road back to Djedida. Perhaps by now the Basha has had his dollars, or the Sultan has summoned him to help fight Bu Hamara. In any case I like to think that his few weeks with us will rank among the pleasant times of his life, for he proved a patient, enduring man, and though silent, a not unedifying companion.

Among the strange stories I heard in Djedida while preparing for the journey was one relating to the then War Minister, Kaid Mahedi el Menebhi, sometime envoy to the Court of St. James's. In his early days Menebhi, though a member of the great Atlas Kabyle of that name, had been a poor lad running about Djedida's streets, ready and willing to earn a handful of *floos*[1] by hard work of any description. Then he set up in business as a mender of old shoes and became notorious, not because of his skill as a cobbler, but on

[1] Base copper coins, of which a penny will purchase a score.

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account of his quick wit and clever ideas. In all Mohammedan countries a Believer may rise without any handicap on account of lowly origin, and so it fell out that the late Grand Wazeer, Ba Ahmad, during a visit to Djedida heard of the young cobbler's gifts, and straightway gave him a place in his household. Thereafter promotion was rapid and easy for Menebhi, and the lad who had loafed about the streets with the outcasts of the city became, under the Sultan, the first man in Morocco. "To-day," concluded my informant, "he has palaces and slaves and a great hareem, he is a Chief Wazeer and head of the Sultan's forces, but he still owes a merchant in Djedida some few dollars on account of leather he had bought and forgot to pay for when Ba Ahmad took him to Marrakesh."[1]

In the R'hamna country, on the way to the southern capital, we pitched our tents one night in a Government n'zala, or guarded camping-ground, one of many that are spread about the country for the safety of travellers. The price of corn, eggs, and chickens was amazingly high, and the Maalem explained that the n'zala was kept by some of the immediate family of Mahedi el Menebhi, who had put them there, presumably to make what profit they could. I looked very carefully at our greedy hosts. They were a rough unprepossessing crowd, but their wealth in sheep and goats alone was remarkable, and their stock was safe from molestation, for they

[1] It is fair to say that this is no more than one of many stories relating to the great Wazeer's early days. Another says that he started life as a soldier. There is no doubt that he is a man of extraordinary talent.

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A BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

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were known to be relatives of the Sultan's chief minister, a man whose arm is long and hard-hitting. Since last autumn Menebhi has resigned his high office, reduced his household, manumitted many slaves, and gone on the great pilgrimage to Mecca, so it may be presumed that his relatives in the forsaken R'hamna country have lowered their prices. Yet, 'tis something to have a great wazeer for relative even though, for the time being, loss of favour has given him leisure for pious observances.

At length the evening came, when the last mule was selected, the last package made up, and nothing lay between us and the open road. Sleep was hard to woo. I woke before daylight, and was in the patio before the first animal arrived, or the sleepy porter had fumbled at the door of the warehouse where the luggage was stacked.

> Morn in the white wake of the morning star
> Came furrowing all the orient into gold,

and gave to the tops of walls and battlements a momentary tinge of rose colour, a sight well worth the effort demanded by early rising. Sparrow-hawks and pigeons were fluttering over their nests on the deserted battlements, a stork eyed me with solemn curiosity from the minaret of a near mosque, and only the earliest wayfarers were astir. How slowly the men seemed to do their work, and how rapidly the morning wore on. Ropes and palmetto baskets refused to fit at the last moment, two mules were restive until their "father," the Maalem, very wide awake and energetic,

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cursed their religion, and reminded them that they were the children of asses renowned throughout the Moghreb for baseness and immorality. One animal was found at the last moment to be saddle-galled, and was rejected summarily, despite its "father's" frenzied assurances. Though I had been astir shortly before three, and at work soon after four, it was nearly seven o'clock when the last crooked way had been made straight, the last shwarri[1] balanced, and the luggage mules were moving to the Dukala gate.

The crowd of curious onlookers then gave way, some few wishing us well on the journey. I daresay there were many among them, tied by their daily toil to the town, who thought with longing of the pleasant road before us, through fertile lands where all the orchards were aflower and the peasants were gathering the ripe barley, though April had yet some days to revel in. Small boys waved their hands to us, the water-carrier carrying his tight goat-skin from the wells set his cups a-tinkling, as though by way of a God-speed, and then M'Barak touched his horse with the spur to induce the bravery of a caracole, and led us away from Djedida. I drew a long breath of pleasure and relief; we were upon the road.

[1] A pannier made of palmetto.

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ON THE MOORISH ROAD

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A SAINT'S TOMB

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CHAPTER III

ON THE MOORISH ROAD

With the brief gladness of the Palms, that tower and sway o'er seething plain,
Fraught with the thoughts of rustling shade, and welling spring, and rushing rain ;
'Tis their's to pass with joy and hope, whose souls shall ever thrill and fill
Dreams of the Birthplace and the Tomb,—visions of Allah's Holy Hill. *The Kasidah.*

We travel slowly, for the Maalem "father" of the pack-mules—guide, philosopher, and trusted companion—says that haste kills strong men, and often repeats a Moorish proverb which tells us that walking is better than running, and that of all things sitting still is best. If Salam and I, reaching a piece of level sward by the side of some orchard or arable land when the heat of the day has passed, venture to indulge in a brisk canter, the Maalem's face grows black as his eyes.

"Have a care," he said to me one evening, "for this place is peopled by djinoon, and if they are disturbed they will at least kill the horses and mules,

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and leave us to every robber among the hills." Doubtless the Maalem prophesied worse things than this, but I have no Arabic worth mention, and Salam, who acts as interpreter, possesses a very fair amount of tact. I own to a vulgar curiosity that urges me to see a djin if I can, so, after this warning, Salam and I go cantering every late afternoon when the Enemy, as some Moors call the sun, is moving down towards the west, and the air gets its first faint touch of evening cool. Fortunately or unfortunately, the evil spirits never appear however, unless unnoticed by me in the harmless forms of storks, stock-doves, or sparrow-hawks.

In this fertile province of the Dukala, in the little-known kingdom of the victorious Sultan, Mulai Abd-el-Aziz, there are delightful stretches of level country, and the husbandman's simplest toil suffices to bring about an abundant harvest. Unhappily a great part of the province is not in permanent cultivation at all. For miles and miles, often as far as the eye can see, the land lies fallow, never a farmhouse or village to be seen, nothing save some zowia or saint's tomb, with white dome rising within four white walls to stare undaunted at the fierce African sun, while the saint's descendants in the shelter of the house live by begging from pious visitors. Away from the fertility that marks the neighbourhood of the douars, one finds a few spare bushes, suddra, retam, or colocynth, a few lizards darting here and there, and over all a supreme silence that may be felt, even as the darkness that

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NEAR A WELL IN THE COUNTRY

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troubled Egypt in days of old. The main track, not to be dignified by the name of road, is always to be discerned clearly enough, at least the Maalem is never in doubt when stray paths, leading from nowhere to the back of beyond, intersect it.

At long intervals we pass a n'zala, a square empty space surrounded by a zariba of thorn and prickly pear. The village, a few wattled huts with conical roofs, stands by its side. Every n'zala is a Government shelter for travellers; you may pitch your tent within the four walls, and even if you remain outside and hire guards the owners of the huts are responsible for your safety, with their worldly goods, perhaps with their lives. I have tried the interior of the Moorish n'zalas, where all too frequently you must lie on unimagined filth, often almost within reach of camel-drivers and muleteers, who are so godly that they have no time to be clean, and I have concluded that the drawbacks outweigh the advantages. Now I pitch my tent on some cleaner spot, and pay guards from the village to stretch their blankets under its lee and go to sleep. If there are thieves abroad the zariba will not keep them out, and if there are no thieves a tired traveller may forget his fatigue.

On the road we meet few wayfarers, and those we encounter are full of suspicion. Now and again we pass some country kaid or khalifa out on business. As many as a dozen well-armed slaves and retainers may follow him, and, as a rule, he rides a well-fed Barb with a fine crimson saddle and many saddle cloths.

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Over his white djellaba is a blue selham that came probably from Manchester; his stirrups are silver or plated. He travels unarmed and seldom uses spurs —a packing needle serves as an effective substitute. When he has spurs they are simply spear-heads—sharp prongs without rowels. The presence of Unbelievers in the country of the True Faith is clearly displeasing to him, but he is nearly always diplomat enough to return my laboured greeting, though doubtless he curses me heartily enough under his breath. His road lies from village to village, his duty to watch the progress of the harvest for his overlord. Even the locusts are kinder than the country kaids. But so soon as the kaid has amassed sufficient wealth, the governor of his province, or one of the high wazeers in the Sultan's capital, will despoil him and sell his place to the highest bidder, and in the fulness of time the Sultan will send for that wazeer or governor, and treat him in similar fashion. "Mektub," it is written, and who shall avoid destiny?[1]

When the way is long and the sun hot, pack and saddle animals come together, keeping a level pace of some five miles an hour, and Salam or the Maalem beguiles the tedium of the way with song or legend. The Maalem has a song that was taught him by one of his grandfather's slaves, in the far-off days when Mulai Mohammed reigned in Red Marrakesh. In this chant,

[1] "There happeneth no misfortune on the earth or to yourselves, but it is written in the Book before we created it: verily that is easy to Allah."—Al Koran; Sura, "The Tree."

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NEAR A WELL IN THE TOWN

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with its weird monotonous refrain, the slaves sing of their journey from the lands of the South, the terrors of the way, the lack of food and water. It is a dismal affair enough, but the Maalem likes it, and Salam, riding under a huge Tetuan hat, carrying my shot gun, in case some fresh meat should come along, and keeping watchful eye on the mules, joins lustily in the refrain. Salam has few songs of his own, and does not care to sing them, lest his importance should suffer in the native eyes, but he possesses a stock of Arabian Nights' legends, and quotes them as though they were part of Al Koran.

Now and again, in some of the waste and stony places beyond Dukala's boundaries, we come across a well, literally a well in the desert, with husbandmen gathered about it and drawing water in their goat-skin buckets, that are tied to long palmetto ropes made by the men of the neighbouring villages. The water is poured into flat, puddled troughs, and the thirsty flocks and herds drink in turn, before they march away to hunt for such scanty herbage as the land affords. The scene round these wells is wonderfully reminiscent of earliest Bible times, particularly so where the wandering Bedouins bring their flocks to water from the inhospitable territory of the Wad Nun and deserts below the Sus.

I note with pleasure the surprising dignity of the herdsmen, who make far less comment upon the appearonce of the stranger in these wild places than we should make upon the appearance of a Moor or Berber in a London street.

The most unmistakable tribute to the value of the

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water is paid by the skeletons of camels, mules, sheep and goats that mark the road to the well. They tell the tale of animals beaten by the Enemy in their last stride. It is not easy for a European to realise the suffering these strange lands must see when the summer drought is upon the face of the earth. Perhaps they are lessened among the human sufferers by the very real fatalism that accepts evil as it accepts good, without grief and without gladness, but always with philosophic calm; at least we should call it philosophic in a European; superstitious fatalism, of course, in a Moor.

The earliest and latest hours of our daily journey are, I think, the best. When afternoon turns toward evening in the fertile lands, and the great heat begins to pass, countless larks resume their song, while from every orchard one hears the subdued murmur of doves or the mellow notes of the nightingale. Storks sweep in wide circles overhead or teach their awkward young the arts of flight, or wade solemnly in search of supper to some marsh where the bull-frogs betray their presence by croaking as loudly as they can. The decline of the sun is quite rapid—very often the afterglow lights us to our destination. It is part of the Maalem's duty to decide upon the place of our nightly sojourn, and so to regulate the time of starting, the pace, and the mid-day rest, that he may bring us to the village or n'zala in time to get the tent up before darkness has fallen. The little man is master of every turn in the road, and has only failed once—when he brought us to a large village, where the bulk of the inhabitants of outlying douars had attacked

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MOORISH WOMAN AND CHILD

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the Governor's house, with very little success, on the previous day, and were now about to be attacked in their turn by the Governor and his bodyguard. There had been much firing and more shouting, but nobody was badly hurt. Prudence demanded that the journey be resumed forthwith, and for three hours the Maalem kept his eyes upon the stars and cursed the disturbers of the land's peace. Then we reached the desired haven, and passed unscathed through the attacks of the native dogs that guarded its approaches.

The procedure when we approach a n'zala in the evening is highly interesting. Some aged headman, who has seen our little company approaching, stands by the edge of the road and declares we are welcome.[1] Salam or the Maalem responds and presents me, a traveller from the far country of the Ingliz, carrying letters to the great sheikhs of the South. The headman repeats his welcome and is closely questioned concerning the existing supplies of water, corn, milk, eggs, and poultry. These points being settled, Salam asks abouts guards. The strangers would sleep outside the n'zala: Can they have guards at a fair price? Three are promised for a payment of about sevenpence apiece, and then the headman precedes us and we turn from the main track to the place of shelter.

Instantly the village is astir. The dogs are driven

[1] This courtesy is truly Eastern, and has many variants. I remember meeting two aged rabbis who were seated on stones by the roadside half a mile from the city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. They rose as I approached, and said in Hebrew, "Blessed be he who cometh."

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off. Every wattled hut yields its quota of men, women, and children, spectral in their white djellabas and all eager to see the strangers and their equipment. The men collect in one group and talk seriously of the visit, well assured that it has some significance, probably unpleasant; the women, nervous by nature and training, do not venture far from their homes and remain veiled to the eyes. But the children—dark, picturesque, half-naked boys and girls—are nearly free from fear if not from doubt. The tattoo marks on their chins keep them safe from the evil eye; so they do not run much risk from chance encounter with a European. They approach in a constantly shifting group, no detail of the unpacking is lost to them, they are delighted with the tent and amazed at the number of articles required to furnish it, they refuse biscuits and sugar, though Salam assures them that both are good to eat, and indeed sugar is one of the few luxuries of their simple lives.

By the headman's direction our wants are supplied. The patriarch, with his long white beard and clear far-seeing eyes, receives the respect and obedience of all the village, settles all disputes, and is personally responsible to the kaid of the district for the order and safety of the n'zala. Three men come from the well, each bearing a big clay amphora of water that must be boiled before we drink it. One brings an ample measure of barley, costing about four shillings or a little more in English money, another bends under a great load of straw. Closely-veiled women carry small jars of milk and hand them to their lord, who brings

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EVENING ON THE PLAINS

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them up to Salam and states the price demanded. Milk is dear throughout Morocco in the late spring and summer, for, herbage being scanty, cows are small and poor. Eggs, on the other hand, are cheap; we can buy a dozen for twopence or its equivalent in Spanish or Moorish money, and chickens cost about fivepence apiece. If Salam, M'Barak and the Maalem were travelling alone they would pay less, but a European is rarely seen, and his visit must be made memorable.

Provisions purchased, the tent up, mules and horses tethered together in full view of the tent, a great peace falls upon our little party. I am permitted to lie at full length on a horse rug and stare up at the dark, star-spangled sky; Salam has dug a little hole in the ground, made a charcoal fire, and begun to prepare soup and boil the water for coffee. The Maalem smokes kief in furtive manner, as though orthodox enough to be ashamed of the practice, while M'Barak prepares plates and dishes for the evening meal. Around, in a semicircle, some ten yards away, the men and boys of the village sit observing us solemnly. They have little to say, but their surprise and interest are expressed quite adequately by their keen unfailing regard. The afterglow passes and charcoal fires are lighted at the edge of most of the native huts, in preparation for the evening meal, for the young shepherds have come from the fields and the flocks are safely penned. In the gathering dusk the native women, passing through the smoke or by the flame of their fire, present a most weird picture, as it might be

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they were participating in a Witches' Sabbath. Darkness envelops all the surrounding country, hiding the road by which we came, sealing up the track we have to follow, striking a note of loneliness that is awesome without being unpleasant. With what we call civilisation hundreds of miles away, in a country where law and order are to be regarded more as names than facts, one has a great joy in mere living, intensified doubtless by long hours spent in the saddle, by occasional hard work and curtailed rest, and by the daily sight of the rising sun.

The evening meal is a simple affair of soup, a chicken, and some coffee to follow, and when it is over I make my way to the kitchen tent, where the men have supped, and send M'Barak with an invitation to the headman and his sons. The blessed one makes his way to the headman's hut, while Salam clears up the débris of the meal, and the Maalem, conscious that no more work will be expected of him, devotes his leisure to the combustion of hemp, openly and unashamed. With many compliments the headman arrives, and I stand up to greet and bid him welcome—an effort that makes heavy call upon my scanty store of Arabic. The visitors remove their slippers and sit at ease, while Salam makes a savoury mess of green tea, heavily sweetened and flavoured with mint. My visitors are too simply pious to smoke, and regard the Maalem with displeasure and surprise, but he is quite beyond the reach of their reproaches now. His eyes are staring glassily, his lips have a curious ashen colour, his

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hands are twitching—the hemp god has him by the throat. The village men turn their backs upon this degraded Believer, and return thanks to Allah the One for sending an infidel who gives them tea. Broadly speaking, it is only coast Moors, who have suffered what is to them the contamination of European influences, that smoke in Morocco.

Like the Walrus and the Carpenter, we talk of many things, Salam acting as interpreter. The interests of my guests are simple: good harvests, abundant rain, and open roads are all they desire. They have never seen the sea or even a big Moorish town, but they have heard of these things from travellers and traders who have passed their nights in the n'zala in times recent or remote, and sometimes they appeal to me to say if these tales are true. Are there great waters of which no man may drink—waters that are never at rest? Do houses with devils (? steam engines) in them go to and fro upon the face of these waters? Are there great cities so big that a man cannot walk from end to end in half a day? I testify to the truth of these things, and the headman praises Allah, who has done what seemed good to him in lands both near and far. It is, I fear, the headman's polite way of saying that Saul is among the prophets. My revolver, carefully unloaded, is passed from hand to hand, its uses and capacities are known even to these wild people, and the weapon creates more interest than the tent and all its varied equipment. Naturally enough, it turns the talk to war and slaughter, and I learn that the local kaid has an end-

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less appetite for thieves and other children of shameless women, that guns are fired very often within his jurisdiction, and baskets full of heads have been collected after a purely local fight. All this is said with a quiet dignity, as though to remind me that I have fallen among people of some distinction, and the effect is only spoilt by the recollection that nearly every headman has the same tale to tell. Sultans, pretenders, wazeers, and high court functionaries are passed in critical review, their faults and failings noted. I cannot avoid the conclusion that the popular respect is for the strong hand—that civilised government would take long to clear itself of the imputation of cowardice. The local kaid is always a tyrant, but he is above all things a man, keen-witted, adventurous, prompt to strike, and determined to bleed his subjects white. So the men of the village, while suffering so keenly from his arbitrary methods, look with fear and wonder at their master, respect him secretly, and hope the day will come when by Allah's grace they too will be allowed to have mastery over their fellows and to punish others as they have been punished. Strength is the first and greatest of all virtues, so far as they can see, and cunning and ferocity are necessary gifts in a land where every man's hand is against his neighbour.

The last cup of green tea has been taken, the charcoal, no longer refreshed by the bellows, has ceased to glow, around us the native fires are out. The hour of repose is upon the night, and the great athletic villagers rise, resume their slippers, and pass with

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TRAVELLERS BY NIGHT

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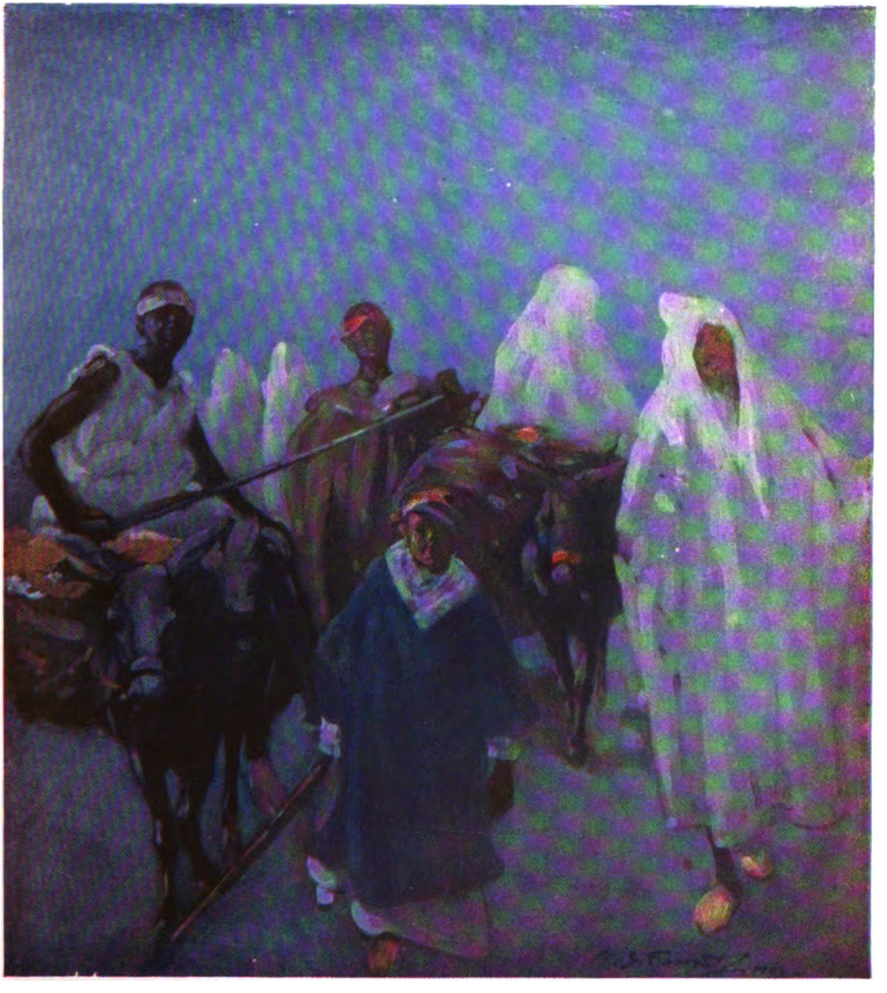

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civil salutation to their homes. Beyond the tent our guards are sleeping soundly in their blankets; the surrounding silence is overwhelming. The grave itself could hardly be more still. Even the hobbled animals are at rest, and we enter into the enveloping silence for five or six dreamless hours.

The horses stir and wake me; I open the tent and call the men. Our guards rouse themselves and retire to their huts. The Maalem, no worse, to outward seeming, for the night's debauch, lights the charcoal. It is about half-past three, the darkness has past but the sun has not risen, the land seems plunged in heavy sleep, the air is damp and chill. Few pleasures attach to this early rising, but it is necessary to be on the road before six o'clock in order to make good progress before the vertical rays of the sun bid us pause and seek what shelter we can find. Two hours is not a long time in which to strike tents, prepare breakfast,—a solid affair of porridge, omelette, coffee, marmalade and biscuits,—pack everything, and load the mules. We must work with a will, or the multi-coloured pageant in the eastern sky will have passed before we are on the road again.

Early as it is we are not astir much before the village. Almost as soon as I am dressed the shepherd boys and girls are abroad, playing on their reed flutes as they drive the flocks to pasture from the pens to which they were brought at sundown. They go far afield for food if not for water, but evening must see their

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animals safely secured once more, for if left out overnight the nearest predatory tribesmen would carry them off. There is no security outside the village, and no village is safe from attack when there is unrest in the province. A cattle raid is a favourite form of amusement among the warlike tribes of the Moorish country, being profitable, exciting, and calculated to provoke a small fight.

A group of interested observers assembles once more, reinforced by the smallest children, who were too frightened to venture out of doors last night. Nothing disturbs the little company before we leave the camp. The headman, grave and dignified as ever, receives payment for corn, straw, chickens, milk, eggs, water, and guards, a matter of about ten shillings in English money, and a very large sum indeed for such a tiny village to receive. The last burden is fastened on the patient mules, girths and straps and belts are examined, and we pass down the incline to the main road and turn the horses' heads to the Atlas Mountains.

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TO THE GATES OF MARRAKESH

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THE R'KASS

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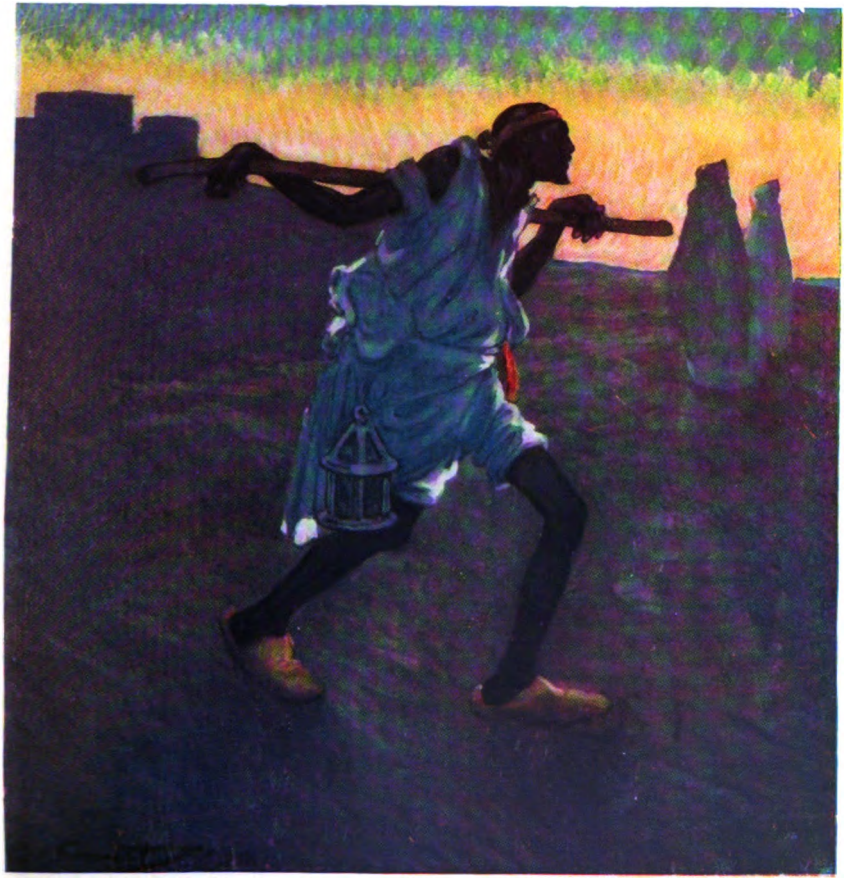

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CHAPTER IV

TO THE GATES OF MARRAKESH

In hawthorn-time the heart grows bright,
The world is sweet in sound and sight,
Glad thoughts and birds take flower and flight,
The heather kindles toward the light,
The whin is frankincense and flame.

The Tale of Balen.

If you would savour the true sense of Morocco, and enjoy glimpses of a life that belongs properly to the era of Genesis, journey through Dukala, Shiadma, or Haha in April. Rise early, fare simply, and travel far enough to appreciate whatever offers for a camping-ground, though it be no more than the grudging shadow of a wall at mid-day, or a n'zala not overclean, when from north, south, east, and west the shepherd boys and girls are herding their flocks along the homeward way. You will find the natives kind and leisured enough to take interest in your progress, and, their confidence gained, you shall gather, if you will, some knowledge of the curious, alluring point of view that belongs to fatalists. I have been struck by the dignity, the patience, and the endurance of the Moor, by whom

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I mean here the Arab who lives in Morocco, and not the aboriginal Berber, or the man with black blood preponderating in his veins. To the Moor all is for the best. He knows that Allah has bound the fate of each man about his neck, so he moves fearlessly and with dignity to his appointed end, conscious that his God has allotted the palace or the prison for his portion, and that fellow-men can no more than fulfil the divine decree. Here lies the secret of the bravery that, when disciplined, may yet shake the foundations of Western civilisation. How many men pass me on the road bound on missions of life or death, yet serene and placid as the mediæval saints who stand in their niches in some cathedral at home. Let me recall a few fellow-wayfarers and pass along the roadless way in their company once again.

First and foremost stands out a khalifa, lieutenant of a great country kaid, met midmost Dukala, in a place of level barley fields new cut with the *media luna*. Brilliant poppies and irises stained the meadows on all sides, and orchards whose cactus hedges, planted for defence, were now aflame with blood-red flowers, became a girdle of beauty as well as strength. The khalifa rode a swiftly-ambling mule, a beast of price, his yellow slippers were ostentatiously new, and his ample girth proclaimed the wealthy man in a land where all the poor are thin. "Peace," was his salutation to M'Barak, who led the way, and when he reached us he again invoked the Peace of Allah upon Our Lord Mohammed and the Faithful of the

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A TRAVELLER ON THE PLAINS

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Prophet's House, thereby and with malice aforethought excluding the infidel. Like others of his class who passed us he was but ill-pleased to see the stranger in the land; unlike the rest he did not conceal his convictions. Behind him came three black slaves, sleek, armed, proud in the pride of their lord, and with this simple retinue the khalifa was on his way to tithe the newly-harvested produce of the farmers who lived in that district. Dangerous work, I thought, to venture thus within the circle of the native douars and claim the lion's share of the hard-won produce of the husbandmen. He and his little company would be outnumbered in the proportion of thirty or forty to one, they had no military following, and yet went boldly forth to rob on the kaid's behalf. I remembered how, beyond Tangier, the men of the hills round Anjera had risen against an unpopular khalifa, had tortured him in atrocious fashion, and left him blind and hideously maimed, to be a warning to all tyrants. Doubtless our prosperous fellow-traveller knew all about it, doubtless he realised that the Sultan's authority was only nominal, but he knew that his immediate master, the Basha, still held his people in an iron grip while, above and beyond all else, he knew by the living faith that directed his every step in life, that his own fate, whether good or evil, was already assigned to him. I heard the faint echo of the greeting offered by the dogs of the great douar into which he passed, and felt well assured that the protests of the village folk, if they ventured to protest, would move him no more than the barking of those

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pariahs. The hawks we saw poised in the blue above our heads when small birds sang at sunsetting, were not more cheerfully devoid of sentiment than our khalifa, though it may be they had more excuse than he.

On another afternoon we sat at lunch in the grateful sombre shade of a fig-tree. Beyond the little stone dyke that cut the meadow from the arable land a negro ploughed with an ox and an ass, in flat defiance of Biblical injunction. The beasts were weary or lazy, or both, and the slave cursed them with an energy that was wonderful for the time of day. Even the birds had ceased to sing, the cicadas were silent in the tree tops, and when one of the mules rolled on the ground and scattered its pack upon all sides, the Maalem was too exhausted to do more than call it the "son of a Christian and a Jew."

Down the track we had followed came a fair man, of slight build, riding a good mule. He dismounted by the tree to adjust his saddle, tighten a stirrup thong, and say a brief prayer. Then, indifferent to the heat, he hurried on, and Salam, who had held short converse with him, announced that he was an emissary of Bu Hamara the Pretender, speeding southward to preach the rising to the Atlas tribes. He carried his life in his hands through the indifferently loyal southern country, but the burden was not heavy enough to trouble him. Bu Hamara, the man no bullets could injure, the divinely directed one, who could call the dead from their pavilion in Paradise to encourage the living,

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THE MID-DAY HALT

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had bade him go rouse the sleeping southerners, and so he went, riding fearlessly into the strong glare that wrapt and hid him. His work was for faith or for love: it was not for gain. If he succeeded he would not be rewarded, if he failed he would be forgotten.

Very often, at morning, noon, and sunset, we would meet the r'kass or native letter-carrier, a wiry man from the Sus country, more often than not, with naked legs and arms. In his hand he would carry the long pole that served as an aid to his tired limbs when he passed it behind his shoulders, and at other times helped him to ford rivers or defend himself against thieves. An eager, hurrying fellow was the r'kass, with rarely enough breath to respond to a salutation as he passed along, his letters tied in a parcel on his back, a lamp at his girdle to guide him through the night, and in his wallet a little bread or parched flour, a tiny pipe, and some kief. Only if travelling in our direction would he talk, repaying himself for the expenditure of breath by holding the stirrup of mule or horse. Resting for three to five hours in the twenty-four, sustaining himself more with kief than with bread, hardened to a point of endurance we cannot realise, the r'kass is to be met with on every Moorish road that leads to a big city—a solitary, brave, industrious man, who runs many risks for little pay. His letters delivered, he goes to the nearest house of public service, there to sleep, to eat sparingly and smoke incessantly, until he is summoned to the road again. No matter if the tribes are out on the warpath, so that the caravans and merchants may not pass,—no matter if

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the powder "speaks" from every hill,—the r'kass slips through with his precious charge, passing lightly as a cloud over a summer meadow, often within a few yards of angry tribesmen who would shoot him at sight for the mere pleasure of killing. If the luck is against him he must pay the heaviest penalty, but this seldom occurs unless the whole country-side is aflame. At other times, when there is peace in the land, and the wet season has made the unbridged rivers impassable, whole companies of travellers camp on either side of some river—a silver thread in the dry season, a rushing torrent now. But the r'kass knows every ford, and, his long pole aiding him, manages to reach his destination. It is his business to defy Nature if necessary, just as he defies man in the pursuit of his task. He is a living proof of the capacity and dogged endurance still surviving in a race Europeans affect to despise.

We met slaves-dealers too from time to time, carrying women and children on mules, while the men slaves walked along at a good pace. And the dealers by no means wore the villainous aspect that conventional observers look to see, but were plainly men bent upon business, travelling to make money. They regarded the slaves as merchandise, to be kept in tolerably fair condition for the sake of good sales, and unless Ruskin was right when he said that all who are not actively kind are cruel, there seemed small ground on which to condemn them. To be sure, they were taking slaves from market to market, and not bringing Soudanese captives from the extreme South, so we saw no trace of

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the trouble that comes of forced travel in the desert, but even that is equally shared by dealers and slave alike.

The villages of Morocco are no more than collections of conical huts built of mud and wattle and palmetto, or goat and camel skins. These huts are set in a circle all opening to the centre, where the live-stock and agricultural implements are kept at night. The furniture of a tent is simple enough. Handloom and handmill, earthenware jars, clay lamps, a mattress, and perhaps a tea-kettle fulfil all requirements.

A dazzling, white-domed saint's shrine within four square walls lights the landscape here and there, and gives to some douar such glory as a holy man can yield when he has been dead so long that none can tell the special direction his holiness took. The zowia serves several useful purposes. The storks love to build upon it, and perhaps the influence of its rightful owner has something to do with the good character of the interesting young birds that we see plashing about in the marshes, and trying to catch fish or frogs with something of their parents' skill. Then, again, the zowia shelters the descendants of the holy man, who prey upon passers in the name of Allah and of the departed.

Beyond one of the villages graced with the shrine of a forgotten saint, I chanced upon a poor Moorish woman washing clothes at the edge of a pool. She used a native grass-seed in place of soap, and made the linen very white with it. On a great stone by the water's edge sat a very old and very black slave, and I

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tried with Salam's aid to chat with him. But he had no more than one sentence. "I have seen many Sultans," he cried feebly, and to every question he responded with these same words. Two tiny village boys stood hand in hand before him and repeated his words, wondering. It was a curious picture and set in striking colour, for the fields all round us were full of rioting irises, poppies, and convolvuli; the sun that gilded them was blazing down upon the old fellow's unprotected head. Gnats were assailing him in legions, singing their flattering song as they sought to draw his blood.[1] Before us on a hill two meadows away stood the douar, its conical huts thatched with black straw and striped palmetto, its zowia with minaret points at each corner of the protecting walls, and a stork on one leg in the foreground. It cost me some effort to tear myself away from the place, and as I remounted and prepared to ride off the veteran cried once more, "I have seen many Sultans." Then the stork left his perch on the zowia's walls, and settled by the marsh, clapping his mandibles as though to confirm the old man's statement, and the little boys took up the cry, not knowing what they said. He had seen many Sultans. The Praise to Allah, so had not I.

By another douar, this time on the outskirts of the R'hamna country, we paused for a mid-day rest, and entered the village in search of milk and eggs. All the men save one were at work on the land, and he, the

[1] As the gnat settles he cries, "Habibi," *i.e.* "O my beloved." His, one fears, is but a carnal affection.

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ON GUARD

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guardian of the village, an old fellow and feeble, stood on a sandy mound within the zariba. He carried a very antiquated flint-lock, that may have been own brother to Kaid M'Barak's trusted weapon. I am sure he could not have had the strength to fire, even had he enjoyed the knowledge and possessed the material to load it. It was his business to mount guard over the village treasure. The mound he stood upon was at once the mat'mora that hid the corn store, and the bank that sheltered the silver dollars for whose protection every man of the village would have risked his life cheerfully. The veteran took no notice of our arrival: had we been thieves he could have offered no resistance. He remained silent and stationary, unconscious that the years in which he might have fulfilled his trust had gone for ever. All along the way the boundaries of arable land were marked by little piles of stones and I looked anxiously for some sign of the curious festival that greets the coming of the new corn, a ceremony in which a figure is made for worship by day and sacrifice by night; we were just too late for it. For the origin of this sacrifice the inquirer must go back to the time of nature worship. It was an old practice, of course, in the heyday of Grecian civilisation, and might have been seen in England, I believe, little more than twenty years ago.

Claims for protection are made very frequently upon the road. There are few of the dramatic moments in which a man rushes up, seizes your stirrup and puts himself "beneath the hem of your garment," but there

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are numerous claims for protection of another sort. In Morocco all the Powers that signed the Treaty of Madrid are empowered to grant the privilege. France has protected subjects by the thousand. They pay no taxes, they are not to be punished by the native authorities until their Vice-Consul has been cited to appear in their defence, and, in short, they are put above the law of their own country and enabled to amass considerable wealth. The fact that the foreigner who protects them is often a knave and a thief is a drawback, but the popularity of protection is immense, for the protector may possibly not combine cunning with his greed, while the native Basha or his khalifa quite invariably does. British subjects may not give protection, —happily the British ideals of justice and fair-play have forbidden the much-abused practice,—and the most the Englishman can do is to enter into a trading partnership with a Moor and secure for him a certificate of limited protection called "mukhalat," from the name of the person who holds it. Great Britain has never abused the Protection system, and there are fewer protected Moors in the service or partnership of Britons throughout all Morocco than France has in any single town of importance.

If I had held the power and the will to give protection, I might have been in Morocco to-day, master of a house and a household, drawing half the produce of many fields and half the price of flocks of sheep and herds of goats. Few mornings passed without bringing some persecuted farmer to the camp, generally in the heat of the day, when we rested on his land. He would

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be a tall, vigorous man, burnt brown by the sun, and he would point to his fields and flocks, "I have so many sheep and goats, so many oxen for the plough, so many mules and horses, so much grain unharvested, so much in store. Give me protection, that I may live without fear of my kaid, and half of all I own shall be yours." Then I had to explain through Salam that I had no power to help him, that my Government would do no more than protect me. It was hard for the applicants to learn that they must go unaided. The harvest was newly gathered, it had survived rain and blight and locusts, and now they had to wait the arrival of their kaid or his khalifa, who would seize all they could not conceal,—hawk, locust, and blight in one.

At the village called after its patron saint, Sidi B'noor, a little deputation of tribesmen brought grievances for an airing. We sat in the scanty shade of the zowia wall. M'Barak, wise man, remained by the side of a little pool born of the winter rains; he had tethered his horse and was sleeping patiently in the shadow cast by this long-suffering animal. The headman, who had seen my sporting guns, introduced himself by sending a polite message to beg that none of the birds that fluttered or brooded by the shrine might be shot, for that they were all sacred. Needless perhaps to say that the idea of shooting at noonday in Southern Morocco was far enough from my thoughts, and I sent back an assurance that brought half a dozen of the village notables round us as soon as lunch was over. Strangely enough, they wanted protection—but it was sought on account of

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the Sultan's protected subjects. "The men who have protection between this place and Djedida," declared their spokesman, sorrowfully, "have no fear of Allah or His Prophet. They brawl in our markets and rob us of our goods. They insult our houses,[1] they are without shame, and because of their protection our lives have become very bitter."

"Have you been to your Basha?" I asked the headman.

"I went bearing a gift in my hand, O Highly Favoured," replied the headman, "and he answered me, 'Foolish farmer, shall I bring the Sultan to visit me by interfering with these rebels against Allah who have taken the protection from Nazarenes?' And then he cursed me and drove me forth from his presence. But if you will give protection to us also we will face these misbegotten ones, and there shall be none to come between us."

I could do no more than deliver messages of consolation to the poor tribesmen, who sat in a semicircle, patient in the quivering heat. The old story of goodwill and inability had to be told again, and I never saw men more dejected. At the moment of leave-taking, however, I remembered that we had some empty mineral-water bottles and a large collection of gunmaker's circulars, that had been used as padding for a case of cartridges. So I distributed the circulars and empty bottles among the protection hunters, and they received them with wonder and delight. When I turned to take a last look round, the pages that had pictures of guns

[1] *I.e.* Wives and children, to whom no Moor refers by name.

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A VILLAGE AT DUKALA

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were being passed reverently from hand to hand; to outward seeming the farmers had forgotten their trouble. Thus easily may kindnesses be wrought among the truly simple of this world.

The market of Sidi B'noor is famous for its sales of slaves and horses,[1] but I remember it best by its swarm of blue rock-pigeons and sparrow-hawks, that seemed to live side by side in the walls surrounding the saint's white tomb. For reasons best known to themselves they lived without quarrelling, perhaps because the saint was a man of peace. Surely a sparrow-hawk in our island would not build his nest and live in perfect amity with pigeons. But, as is well known, the influence of the saintly endures after the flesh of the saint has returned to the dust whence it came.

The difference between Dukala and R'hamna, two adjacent provinces, is very marked. All that the first enjoys the second lacks. We left the fertile lands for great stony plains, wind-swept, bare and dry. Skeletons of camels, mules, and donkeys told their story of past sufferings, and the water supply was as scanty as the herbage upon which the R'hamna flocks fare so poorly. In place of prosperous douars, set in orchards amid rich arable land, there were Government n'zalas at long intervals in the waste, with wattled huts, and lean, hungry tribesmen, whose poverty was as plain to see as their ribs. Neither Basha nor Kaid could well grow

[1] It is said to be the largest market in the Sultan's dominions. As many as two thousand camels have been counted at one of the weekly gatherings here.

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fat now in such a place, and yet there was a time when R'hamna was a thriving province after its kind. But it had a warlike people and fierce, to whom the temptation of plundering the caravans that made their way to the Southern capital was irresistible. So the Court Elevated by Allah, taking advantage of a brief interval of peace, turned its forces loose against R'hamna early in the last decade of the nineteenth century. From end to end of its plains the powder "spoke," and the burning douars lighted the roads that their owners had plundered so often. Neither old nor young were spared, and great basketsful of human heads were sent to Red Marrakesh, to be spiked upon the wall by the J'maa Effina. When the desolation was complete from end to end of the province, the Shareefian troops were withdrawn, the few remaining folk of R'hamna were sent north and south to other provinces, the n'zalas were established in place of the forgotten douars, and the Elevated Court knew that there would be no more complaints. That was Mulai el Hassan's method of ruling—may Allah have pardoned him—and his grand wazeer's after him. It is perhaps the only method that is truly understood by the people in Morocco. R'hamna reminded me of the wildest and bleakest parts of Palestine, and when the Maalem said solemnly it was tenanted by djinoon since the insurrection, I felt he must certainly be right.

One evening we met an interesting procession. An old farmer was making his way from the jurisdiction of the local kaid. His "house" consisted of two wives

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and three children. A camel, whose sneering contempt for mankind was very noticeable, shuffled cumbrously beneath a very heavy load of mattresses, looms, rugs, copper kettles, sacks of corn, and other impedimenta. The wives, veiled to the eyes, rode on mules, each carrying a young child; the third child, a boy, walked by his father's side. The barley harvest had not been good in their part of the country, so after selling what he could, the old man had packed his goods on to the camel's back and was flying from the tax-gatherer. To be sure, he might meet robbers on the way to the province of M'touga, which was his destination, but they would do no more than the kaid of his own district; they might even do less. He had been many days upon the road, and was quaintly hopeful. I could not help thinking of prosperous men one meets at home, who declare, in the intervals of a costly dinner, that the Income Tax is an imposition that justifies the strongest protest, even to the point of repudiating the Government that puts it up by twopence in the pound. Had anybody been able to assure this old wanderer that his kaid or khalifa would be content with half the produce of his land, how cheerfully would he have returned to his native douar, how readily he would have—devised plans to avoid payment. A little later the track would be trodden by other families, moving, like the true Bedouins, in search of fresh pasture. It is the habit of the country to leave land to lie fallow when it has yielded a few crops.

There were days when the mirage did for the plain the work that man had neglected. It set great cities

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on the waste land as though for our sole benefit. I saw walls and battlements, stately mosques, cool gardens, and rivers where caravans of camels halted for rest and water. Several times we were deceived and hurried on, only to find that the wonder city, like the *ignis fatuus* of our own marshlands, receded as we approached and finally melted away altogether. Then the Maalem, after taking refuge with Allah from Satan the Stoned, who set false cities before the eyes of tired travellers, would revile the mules and horses for needing a mirage to urge them on the way ; he would insult the fair fame of their mothers and swear that their sires were such beasts as no Believer would bestride. It is a fact that when the Maalem lashed our animals with his tongue they made haste to improve their pace, it only for a few minutes, and Salam, listening with an expression of some concern at the sad family history of the beasts—he had a stinging tongue for oaths himself—assured me that their sense of shame hurried them on. Certainly no sense of shame, or duty, or even compassion, ever moved the Maalem. By night he would repair to the kitchen tent and smoke kief or eat haschisch, but the troubles of preparing beds and supper did not worry him.

"Until the feast is prepared, why summon the guest," he said on a night when the worthy M'Barak, opening his lips for once, remonstrated with him. That evening the feast consisted of some soup made from meat tablets, and two chickens purchased for elevenpence the pair, of a market woman we met on the road. Yet if it was not the feast the Maalem's fancy

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THE APPROACH TO MARRAKESH

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painted it, our long hours in the open air had served to make it more pleasant than many a more elaborate meal.

We rode one morning through the valley of the Little Hills, once a place of unrest notorious by reason of several murders committed there, and deserted now by everything save a few birds of prey. There were gloomy rocks on all sides, the dry bed of a forgotten river offered us an uncomfortable and often perilous path, and we passed several cairns of small stones. The Maalem left his mule in order to pick up stones and add one to each cairn, and as he did so he cursed Satan with great fluency.[1]

It was a great relief to leave the Little Hills and emerge on to the plains of Hillreeli beyond. We had not far to go then before the view opened out, the haze in the far distance took faint shape of a city surrounded by a forest of palms on the western side, a great town with the minarets of many mosques rising from it. At this first view of Red Marrakesh, Salam, the Maalem, and M'Barak extolled Allah, who had renewed to them the sight of Yusuf ibn Tachfin's thousand-year-old city. Then they praised Sidi bel Abbas, the city's patron saint, who by reason of his love for righteous deeds stood on one leg for forty years, praying diligently all the time.

We each and all rendered praise and thanks after our separate fashions, and for me, I lit my last cigarette, careless of the future and well pleased.

[1] The cairns are met frequently in Morocco. Some mark the place from which the traveller may obtain his first view of a near city; others are raised to show where a murder was committed. The cairns in the Little Hills are of the former kind.

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IN RED MARRAKESH

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DATE PALMS NEAR MARRAKESH

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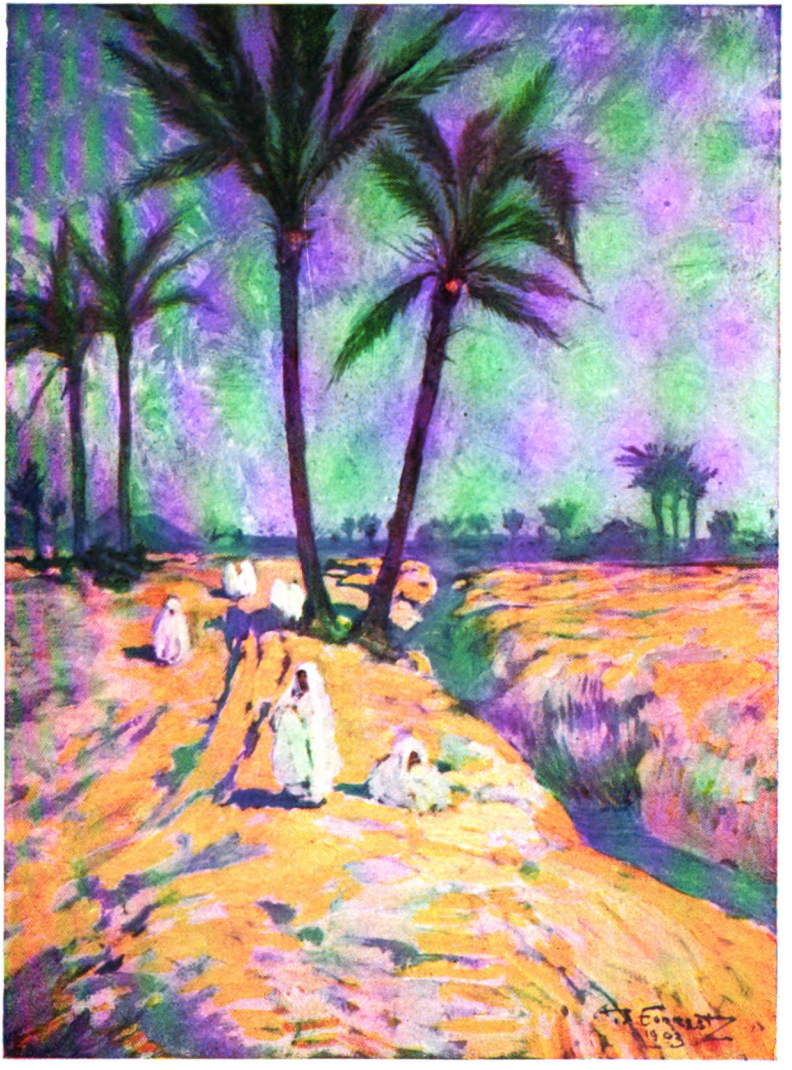

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CHAPTER V

IN RED MARRAKESH

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai,
Whose portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his pomp
Abode his destined hour and went his way.
The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

THERE are certain cities that cannot be approached for the first time by any sympathetic traveller without a sense of solemnity and reverence that is not far removed from awe. Athens, Rome, Constantinople, Damascus, and Jerusalem may be cited as examples; each in its turn has filled me with great wonder and deep joy. But all of these are to be reached nowadays by the railway, that great modern purge of sensibility. Even Jerusalem is not exempt. A single line stretches from Jaffa by the sea to the very gates of the Holy City, playing hide-and-seek among the mountains of Judæa by the way, because the Turk was too poor to tunnel a direct path.

In Morocco, on the other hand, the railway is still unknown. He who seeks any of the country's inland cities must take horse or mule, camel or donkey, or, as a last resource, be content with a staff to aid him, and

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walk. Whether he fare to Fez, the city of Mulai Idrees, in which, an old writer assures us, "all the beauties of the earth are united"; or to Mequinez, where great Mulai Ismail kept a stream of human blood flowing constantly from his palace that all might know he ruled; or to Red Marrakesh, which Yusuf ibn Tachfin built nine hundred years ago,—his own exertion must convoy him. There must be days and nights of scant fare and small comfort, with all those hundred and one happenings of the road that make for pleasant memories. So far as I have been able to gather in the nine years that have passed since I first visited Morocco, one road is like another road, unless you have the Moghrebbin Arabic at your command and can go off the beaten track in Moorish dress. Walter Harris, the resourceful traveller and *Times* correspondent, did this when he sought the oases of Tafilalt, so also, in his fashion, did R. B. Cunninghame Graham when he tried in vain to reach Tarudant, and set out the record of his failure in one of the most fascinating travel books published since *Eothen*.[1]

For the rank and file of us the Government roads and the harmless necessary soldier must suffice, until the Gordian knot of Morocco's future has been untied or cut. Then perhaps, as a result of French pacific penetration, flying railway trains loaded with tourists, guide-book in hand and camera at the ready, will pierce the secret places of the land, and men will speak of "doing" Morocco, as they "do" other countries in

[1] "Moghreb-al-Acksa."

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their rush across the world, seeing all the stereotyped sights and appreciating none. For the present, by Allah's grace, matters are quite otherwise.

Marrakesh unfolded its beauties to us slowly and one by one as we pushed horses and mules into a canter over the level plains of Hillreeli. Forests of date-palm took definite shape; certain mosques, those of Sidi ben Yusuf and Bab Dukala, stood out clearly before us without the aid of glasses, but the Library mosque dominated the landscape by reason of the Kutubia tower by its side. The Atlas Mountains came out of the clouds and revealed the snows that would soon melt and set every southern river aflood, and then the town began to show limits to the east and west where, at first, there was nothing but haze. One or two caravans passed us, northward bound, their leaders hoping against hope that the Pretender, the "dog-descended," as a Susi trader called him, would not stand between them and the Sultan's camp, where the profits of the journey lay. By this time we could see the old grey wall of Marrakesh more plainly, with towers here and there, ruinous as the wall itself, and storks' nests on the battlements, their red-legged inhabitants fulfilling the duty of sentries. To the right, beyond the town, the great rock of Djebel Geelez suggested infinite possibilities in days to come, when some conqueror armed with modern weapons and a pacific mission should wish to bombard the walls in the sacred cause of civilisation. Then the view was lost in the date-palm forest, through which tiny tributaries of the Tensift run babbling over

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the red earth, while the kingfisher or dragon-fly, "a ray of living light," flashes over the shallow water, and young storks take their first lessons in the art of looking after themselves.

When a Moor has amassed wealth he praises God, builds a palace, and plants a garden; or, is suspected, accused—despotic authority is not particular—and cast into prison! In and round Marrakesh many Moors have gained riches and some have held them. The gardens stretch for miles. There are the far-spreading Augdal plantations of the Sultans of Morocco, in part public and elsewhere so private that to intrude would be to court death. The name signifies "the Maze," and they are said to justify it. In the outer or public grounds of this vast pleasaunce the fruit is sold by auction to the merchants of the city in late spring, when blossoming time is over, and, after the sale, buyers must watch and guard the trees until harvest brings them their reward.

We rode past the low-walled gardens, where pomegranate and apricot trees were flowering, and strange birds I did not know sang in the deep shade. Doves flitted from branch to branch, bee-eaters darted about among mulberry and almond trees. There was an overpowering fragrance from the orange groves, where blossom and unplucked fruit showed side by side; the jessamine bushes were scarcely less fragrant. Spreading fig-trees called every passer to enjoy their shade, and the little rivulets, born of the Tensift's winter floods to sparkle through the spring and die in June, were

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ON THE ROAD TO MARRAKESH

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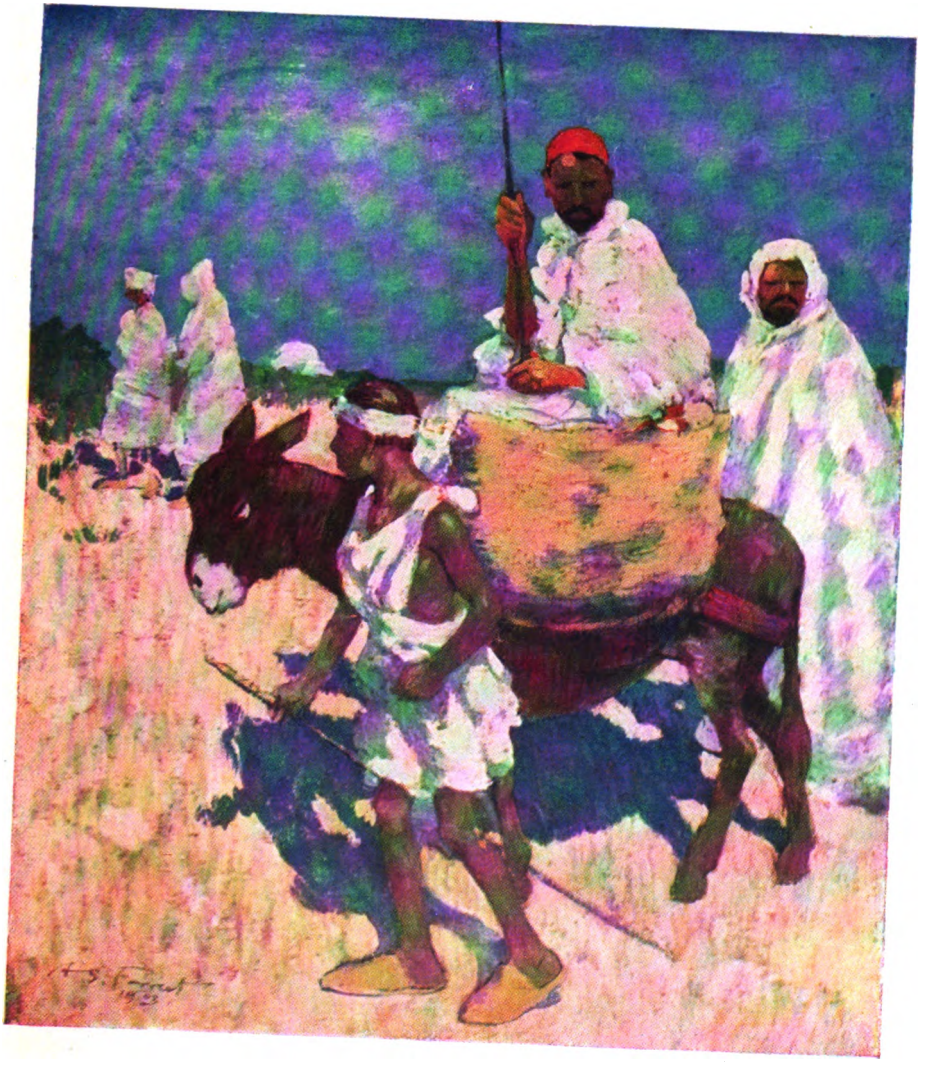

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fringed with willows. It was delightful to draw rein and listen to the plashing of water and the cooing of doves, while trying in vain to recognise the most exquisite among many sweet scents.

Under one of the fig-trees in a garden three Moors sat at tea. A carpet was spread, and I caught a glimpse of the copper kettle, the squat charcoal brazier tended by a slave, the quaint little coffer filled no doubt with fine green tea, the porcelain dish of cakes. It was a quite pleasing picture, at which, had courtesy permitted, I would have enjoyed more than a brief glance.

The claim of the Moors upon our sympathy and admiration is made greater by reason of their love for gardens. As a matter of fact, their devotion may be due in part to the profit yielded by the fruit, but one could afford to forget that fact for the time being, when Nature seemed to be giving praise to the Master of all seasons for the goodly gifts of the spring.

We crossed the Tensift by the bridge, one of the very few to be found in Southern Morocco. It has nearly thirty arches, all dilapidated as the city walls themselves, yet possessing their curious gift of endurance. Even the natives realise that their bridge is crumbling into uselessness, after nearly eight centuries of service, but they do no more than shrug their shoulders, as though to cast off the burden of responsibility and give it to destiny. On the outskirts of the town, where gardens end and open market-squares lead to the gates, a small group of children

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gathered to watch the strangers with an interest in which fear played its part. We waited now to see the baggage animals before us, and then M'Barak led the way past the mosque at the side of the Bab el Khamees and through the brass-covered doors that were brought by the Moors from Spain. Within the Khamees gate, narrow streets with windowless walls frowning on either side shut out all view, save that which lay immediately before us.

No untrained eye can follow the winding maze of streets in Marrakesh, and it is from the Moors we learn that the town, like ancient Gaul of Caesar's *Commentaries*, has three well defined divisions. The Kasbah is the official quarter, where the soldiers and governing officials have their home, and the prison called Hib Misbah receives all evil-doers, and men whose luck is ill. The Madinah is the general Moorish quarter, and embraces the Kaisariyah or bazaar district, where the streets are parallel, well cleaned, thatched with palm and palmetto against the light, and barred with a chain at either end to keep the animals from entering. The Mellah (literally "salted place") is the third great division of Marrakesh, and is the Jewish quarter. In this district, or just beyond it, are a few streets that seem reserved to the descendants of Mulai Ismail's black guards, from whom our word "blackguard" should have come to us, but did not. Within these divisions streets, irregular and without a name, turn and twist in manner most bewildering, until none save old residents may hope to know their way about. Pavements are unknown, drainage is in its most dangerous

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A MINSTREL

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infancy, the rainy season piles mud in every direction, and, as though to test the principle embodied in the homœopathic theory, the Marrakshis heap rubbish and refuse in every street, where it decomposes until the enlightened authorities who dwell in the Kasbah think to give orders for its removal. Then certain men set out with donkeys and carry the sweepings of the gutters beyond the gates.[1] This work is taken seriously in the Madinah, but in the Mellah it is shamefully neglected, and I have ridden through whole streets in the last-named quarter searching vainly for a place clean enough to permit of dismounting. Happily, or unhappily, as you will, the inhabitants are inured from birth to a state of things that must cause the weaklings to pay heavy toll to Death, the Lord who rules even Sultans.

I had little thought to spare for such matters as we rode into Marrakesh for the first time. The spell of the city was overmastering. It is certainly the most African city in Morocco to-day, almost the last survivor of the changes that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and have brought the Dark Continent from end to end within the sphere of European influence. Fez and Mequinez are cities of fair men, while here on every side one recognised the influence of the Soudan and the country beyond the great desert. Not only have the wives and concubines brought from beyond the great sand sea darkened the skin of the

[1] Street cleaners are paid out of the proceeds of a tax derived from the slaughter of cattle, and the tax is known to Moorish butchers by a term signifying "the *floss* of the throat."

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present generation of the Marrakshis, but they have given to most if not to all a suggestion of relationship to the negro races that is not to be seen in any other Moorish city I have visited. It is not a suggestion of fanaticism or intolerance. By their action as well as their appearance one knew most of the passers for friends rather than enemies. They would gratify their curiosity at our expense as we gratified ours at theirs, convinced that all Europeans are harmless, uncivilised folk from a far land, where people smoke tobacco, drink wine, suffer their women-folk to go unveiled, and live without the True Faith.

Marrakesh, like all other inland cities of Morocco, has neither hotel nor guest-house. It boasts some large fandaks, notably that of Hadj Larbi, where the caravans from the desert send their merchandise and chief merchants, but no sane European will choose to seek shelter in a fandak in Morocco unless there is no better place available. There are clean fandaks in Sunset Land, but they are few and you must travel far to find them. I had letters to the chief civilian resident of Marrakesh, Sidi Boubikir, British Political Agent, millionaire, land-owner, financier, builder of palaces, politician, statesman, and friend of all Englishmen who are well recommended to his care. I had heard much of the clever old Moor, who was born in very poor surroundings, started life as a camel driver, and is now the wealthiest and most powerful unofficial resident in Southern Morocco, if not in all the Moghreb, so I bade M'Barak find him without delay. The first person questioned directed

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us to one of Boubikir's fandaks, and by its gate, in a narrow lane, where camels jostled the camp-mules until they nearly foundered in the underlying filth, we found the celebrated man sitting within the porch, on an old packing-case.

He looked up for a brief moment when the kaid dismounted and handed him my letter, and I saw a long, closely-shaven face, lighted by a pair of grey eyes that seemed much younger than the head in which they were set, and perfectly inscrutable. He read the letter, which was in Arabic, from end to end, and then gave me stately greeting.

"You are very welcome," he said. "My house and all it holds are yours."

I replied that we wanted nothing more than a modest shelter for the days of our sojourn in the city. He nodded.

"Had you advised me of your visit in time," he said, "my best house should have been prepared. Now I will send with you my steward, who has the keys of all my houses. Choose which you will have." I thanked him, the steward appeared, a stout, well-favoured man, whose djellaba was finer than his master's. Sidi Boubikir pointed to certain keys, and at a word several servants gathered about us. The old man said that he rejoiced to serve the friend of his friends, and would look forward to seeing me during our stay. Then we followed into an ill-seeming lane, now growing dark with the fall of evening.

We turned down an alley more muddy than the one just left behind, passed under an arch by a fruit stall

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with a covering of tattered palmetto, caught a brief glimpse of a mosque minaret, and heard the mueddin calling the Faithful to evening prayer. In the shadow of the mosque, at the corner of the high-walled lane, there was a heavy metal-studded door. The steward thrust a key into its lock, turned it, and we passed down a passage into an open patio. It was a silent place, beyond the reach of the street echoes; there were four rooms built round the patio on the ground floor, and three or four above. One side of the tower of the minaret was visible from the courtyard, but apart from that the place was nowhere overlooked. To be sure, it was very dirty, but I had an idea that the steward had brought his men out for business, not for an evening stroll, so I bade Salam assure him that this place, known to the Marrakshis as Dar al Kasdir,[1] would serve our purposes.

A thundering knock at the gate announced a visitor, one of Sidi Boubikir's elder sons, a civil, kindly-looking Moor, whose face inspired confidence. Advised of our choice he suggested we should take a stroll while the men cleaned and prepared the patio and the rooms opening upon it. Then the mules, resting for the time in his father's fandak, would bring their burdens home, and we could enjoy our well-earned rest.

We took this good counsel, and on our return an hour later, a very complete transformation had been effected. Palmetto brooms, and water brought from an adjacent well, had made the floor look clean and clear. The warmth of the air had dried everthing, the pack-

[1] *I.e.* The Tin House.

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ONE OF THE CITY GATES

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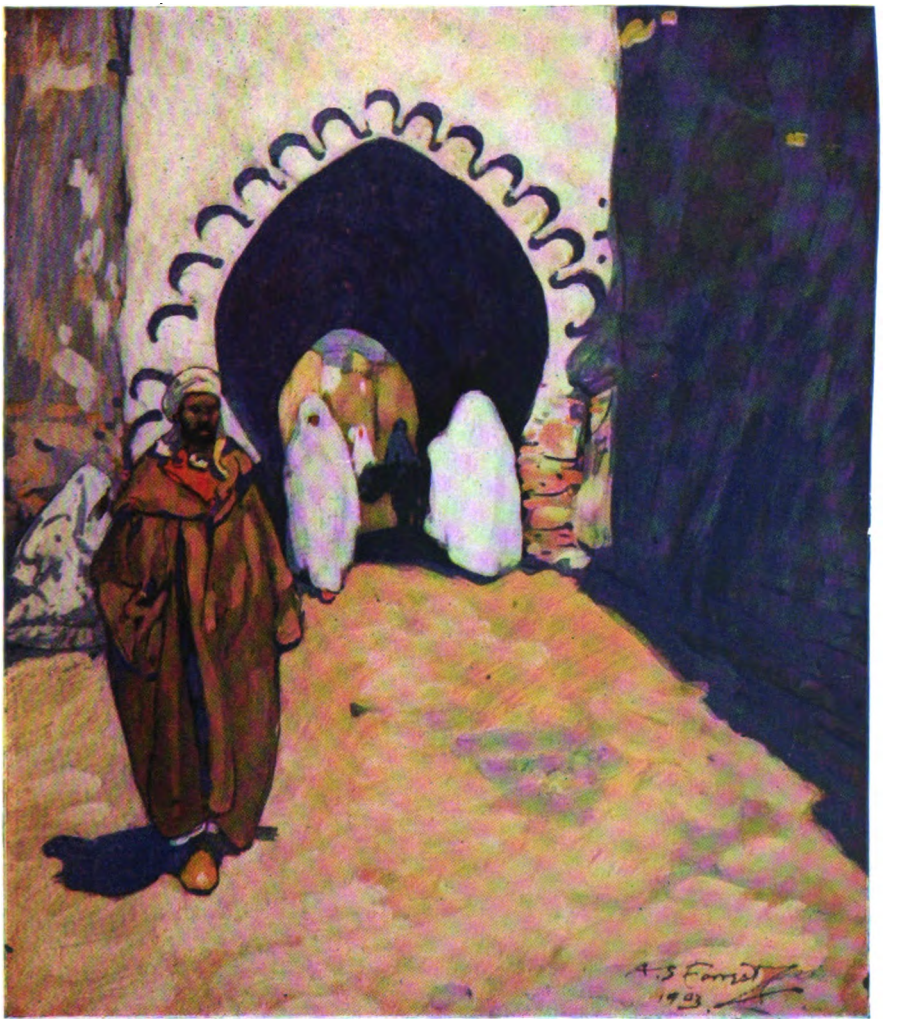

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mules had been relieved of their load and sent back to the stable. Two little earthen braziers full of charcoal were glowing merrily under the influence of the bellows that M'Barak wielded skilfully, and two earthen jars of water with palm leaves for corks had been brought in by our host's servants. In another hour the camp beds were unpacked and made up, a rug was set on the bedroom floor, and the little table and chairs were put in the middle of the patio. From the alcove where Salam squatted behind the twin fires came the pleasant scent of supper; M'Barak, his well-beloved gun at his side, sat silent and thoughtful in another corner, and the tiny clay bowl of the Maalem's long wooden kief pipe was comfortably aglow.

There was a timid knock at the door, the soldier opened it and admitted the shareef. I do not know his name nor whence he came, but he walked up to Salam, greeted him affectionately, and offered his services while we were in the city. Twenty years old perhaps, at an outside estimate, very tall and thin and poorly clad, the shareef was not the least interesting figure I met in Marrakesh. A shareef is a saint in Morocco as in every other country of Islam, and his title implies descent from Mohammed. He may be very poor indeed, but he is more or less holy, devout men kiss the hem of his djellaba, no matter how dirty or ragged it may be, and none may curse a shareef's ancestors, for the Prophet was one of them. His youthful holiness had known Salam in Fez, and had caught sight of him by Boubikir's fandak in the early afternoon. Salam, him-

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self a chief in his own land, though fallen on evil days then and on worse ones since, welcomed the newcomer and brought his offer to me, adding the significant information that the young shareef, who was too proud to beg, had not tasted food in the past forty-eight hours. He had then owed a meal to some Moor, who, following a well-known custom, had set a bowl of food outside his house to conciliate devils. I accepted the proffered service, and had no occasion to regret my action. The young Moor was never in the way and never out of the way, he went cheerfully on errands to all parts of the city, fetched and carried without complaint, and yet never lost the splendid dignity that seemed to justify his claim to saintship.

So we took our ease in the open patio, and the shareef's long fast was broken, and the stars came to the aid of our lanterns, and when supper was over I was well content to sit and smoke, while Salam, M'Barak, the Maalem, and the shareef sat silent round the glowing charcoal, perhaps too tired to talk. It was very pleasant to feel at home after two or three weeks under canvas below Mediunah and along the southern road.

The Maalem rose at last, somewhat unsteadily after his debauch of kief. He moved to where our provisions were stocked and took oil and bread from the store. Then he sought the corner of the wall by the doorway and poured out a little oil and scattered crumbs, repeating the performance at the far end of the patio. This duty done, he bade Salam tell me that it was a peace-offering to the souls of the departed who had inhabited

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this house before we came to it. I apprehend they might have resented the presence of the Infidel had they not been soothed by the Maalem's little attention. He was ever a firm believer in djinoon, and exorcised them with unfailing regularity. The abuse he heaped on Satan must have added largely to the burden of sorrows under which we are assured the fallen angel carries out his appointed work. He had been profuse in his prayers and curses when we entered the barren pathway of the Little Hills behind the plains of Hillreeli, and there were times when I had felt quite sorry for Satan. Oblation offered to the house spirits, the Maalem asked for his money, the half due at the journey's end, sober enough, despite the kief, to count the dollars carefully, and make his farewell with courteous eloquence. I parted with him with no little regret, and look forward with keen pleasure to the day when I shall summon him once again from the bakehouse of Djedida to bring his mules and guide me over the open road, perchance to some destination more remote. I think he will come willingly, and that the journey will be a happy one. The shareef drew the heavy bolt behind the Maalem, and we sought our beds.

It was a brief night's rest. The voice of the mueddin, chanting the call to prayer and the Shehad,[1] roused me again, refreshed. The night was passing; even as the sonorous voice of the unseen chanted his inspiring "Allah Akbar," it was yielding place to the moments when "the Wolf-tail[2] sweeps the paling east."

[1] Declaration of Faith.

[2] The false dawn.

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I looked out of my little room that opened on to the patio. The arch of heaven was swept and garnished, and from "depths blown clear of cloud" great stars were shining whitely. The breeze of early morning stirred, penetrating our barred outer gates, and bringing a subtle fragrance from the beflowered groves that lie beyond the city. It had a freshness that demanded from one, in tones too seductive for denial, prompt action. Moreover, we had been rising before daylight for some days past in order that we might cover a respectable distance before the Enemy should begin to blaze intolerably above our heads, commanding us to seek the shade of some chance fig-tree or saint's tomb.

So I roused Salam, and together we drew the creaking bolts, bringing the kaid to his feet with a jump. There was plenty of time for explanation, because he always carried his gun, at best a harmless weapon, in the old flannel case secured by half a dozen pieces of string, with knots that defied haste. He warned us not to go out, since the djinoon were always abroad in the streets before daylight; but, seeing our minds set, he bolted the door upon us, as though to keep them from the Dar al Kasdir, and probably returned to his slumbers.

Beyond the house, in a faint glow that was already paling the stars, the African city, well-nigh a thousand years old, assumed its most mysterious aspect. The high walls on either side of the roads, innocent of casements as of glass, seemed, in the uncertain light, to be tinted with violet amid their dull grey. The silence

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A BLIND BEGGAR

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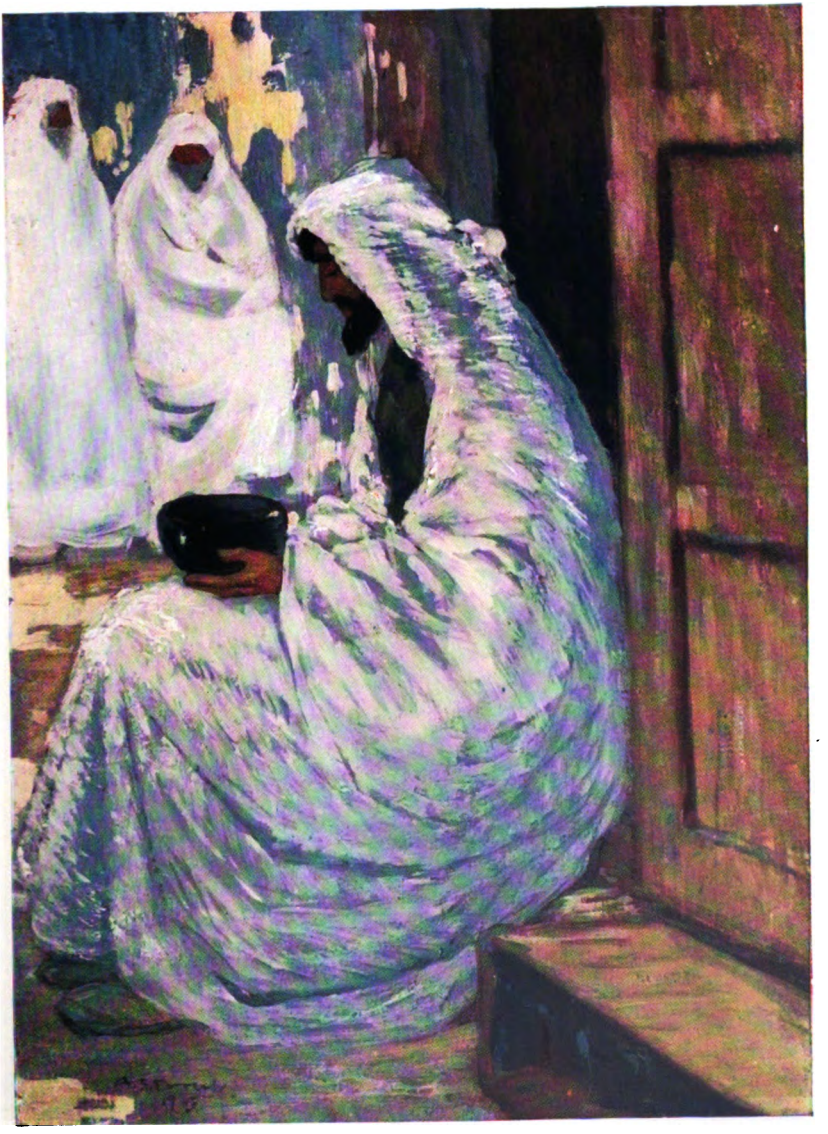

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was complete and weird. Never a cry from man or beast removed the first impression that this was a city of the dead. The entrances of the bazaars in the Kaisariyah, to which we turned, were barred and bolted, their guardians sat motionless, covered in white djellabas, that looked like shrouds. The city's seven gates were fast closed, though doubtless there were long files of camels and market men waiting patiently without. The great mansions of the wazeers and the green-tiled palace of Mulai Abd-el-Aziz — Our Victorious Master the Sultan—seemed unsubstantial as one of those cities that the mirage had set before us in the heart of the R'hamna plains. Salam, the untutored man from the far Riff country, felt the spell of the silent morning hour. It was a primitive appeal, to which he responded instantly, moving quietly by my side without a word.

"O my masters, give charity; Allah helps helpers!" A blind beggar, sitting by the gate, like Bartimæus of old, thrust his withered hand before me. Lightly though we had walked, his keen ear had known the difference in sound between the native slipper and the European boot. It had roused him from his slumbers, and he had calculated the distance so nicely that the hand, suddenly shot out, was well within reach of mine. Salam, my almoner, gave him a handful of the copper money, called *floos*, of which a score may be worth a penny, and he sank back in his uneasy seat with voluble thanks, not to us, but to Allah the One, who had been pleased to move us to work his will. To me no

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thanks were due. I was no more than Allah's unworthy medium, condemned to burn in fires seven times heated, for unbelief.

From their home on the flat house-tops two storks rose suddenly, as though to herald the dawn; the sun became visible above the city's time-worn walls, and turned their colouring from violet to gold. We heard the guards drawing the bars of the gate that is called Bab al Khamees, and knew that the daily life of Marrakesh had begun. The great birds might have given the signal that woke the town to activity.

Straightway men and beasts made their way through the narrow cobbled lanes. Sneering camels, so bulked out by their burdens that a foot-passenger must shrink against the wall to avoid a bad bruising; well-fed horses, carrying some early-rising Moor of rank on the top of seven saddle-cloths; half-starved donkeys, all sores and bruises; one encountered every variety of Moorish traffic here, and the thoroughfare, that had been deserted a moment before, was soon thronged. In addition to the Moors and Susi traders, there were many slaves, black as coal, brought in times past from the Soudan. From garden and orchard beyond the city the fruit and flowers and vegetables were being carried into their respective markets, and as they passed the air grew suddenly fragrant with a scent that was almost intoxicating. The garbage that lay strewn over the cobbles had no more power to offend, and the fresh scents added in some queer fashion of their own to the unreality of the whole scene.

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To avoid the crush we turned to another quarter of the city, noting that the gates of the bazaars were opened, and that only the chains were left across the entrance. But the tiny shops, mere overgrown packing-cases, were still locked up; the merchants, who are of higher rank than the dealers in food-stuffs, seldom appear before the day is aired, and their busiest hours are in the afternoon, when the auction is held. "Custom is from Allah," they say, and, strong in this belief, they hold that time is only valuable as leisure. And, God wot, they may well be wiser herein than we are.

A demented countryman, respected as a saint by reason of his madness, a thing of rags and tatters and woefully unkempt hair, a quite wild creature, more than six feet high, and gaunt as a lightning-smitten pine, came down the deserted bazaar of the brass-workers. He carried a long staff in one hand, a bright tin bowl in the other. The sight of a European heightened his usual frenzy—

> Across his sea of mind
> A thought came streaming like a blazing ship
> Upon a mighty wind.

I saw the sinews stand out on the bare arm that gripped the staff, and his bright eyes were soon fixed upon me. "You do not say words to him, sir," whispered Salam; "he do'n know what he do—he very holy man."

The madman spat on my shadow, and cursed profoundly, while his passion was mastering him. I noted with interest in that uncomfortable moment the clear

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signs of his epileptic tendencies, the twitching of the thumb that grasped the stick, the rigidity of the body, the curious working of certain facial muscles. I stood perfectly still, though my right hand involuntarily sought the pocket of my coat where my revolver lay, the use of which save in direst necessity had been a mad and wicked act; and then two peace-loving Moors, whose blue selhams of fine Manchester cloth proclaimed their wealth and station, came forward and drew the frenzied creature away, very gently and persuasively. He, poor wretch, did not know what was taking place, but moved helplessly to the door of the bazaar and then fell, his fit upon him. I hurried on. Moors are kindly, as well as respectful, to those afflicted of Allah.

We passed on our way to the Bab Dukala, the gate that opens out upon Elhara, the leper quarter. There we caught our morning view of the forest of date-palm that girdles the town. Moors say that in centuries long past Marrakesh was besieged by the men of Tafilalt, who brought dates for food, and cast the stones on the ground. The rain buried them, the Tensift nourished them, and to-day they crowd round Ibn Tachfin's ruinous city, 'their feet in water and their heads in fire.' 'Tis an agreeable legend.

Market men, half naked and very lean, were coming in from Tamsloht and Amsmiz, guiding their heavy-laden donkeys past the crumbling walls and the steep valley that separates Elhara from the town. Some scores of lepers had left their quarters, a few

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A WANDERING MINSTREL

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hiding terrible disfigurement under great straw hats, others quite careless of their deplorable disease. Beggars all, they were going on their daily journey to the shrine of Sidi bel Abbas, patron of the destitute, to sit there beneath the zowia's ample walls, hide their heads in their rags, and cry upon the passers to remember them for the sake of the saint who had their welfare so much at heart. And with the closing of the day they would be driven out of the city, and back into walled Elhara, to such of the mud huts as they called home. Long acquaintance with misery had made them careless of it. They shuffled along as though they were going to work, but from my shaded corner, where I could see without being seen, I noted no sign of converse between them, and every face that could be studied was stamped with the impress of unending misery.

The scene around us was exquisite. Far away one saw the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas; hawks and swallows sailed to and from Elhara's walls; doves were cooing in the orchards, bee-eaters flitted lightly amid the palms. I found myself wondering if the lepers ever thought to contrast their lives with their surroundings, and I trusted they did not. Some few, probably, had not been lepers, but criminals, who preferred the horrid liberty of Elhara to the chance of detection and the living death of the Hib Misbah. Other beggars were not really lepers, but suffered from one or other of the kindred diseases that waste Morocco. In Marrakesh the native doctors are not on any terms with skilled diagnosis, and once a man ventures into Elhara, he

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acquires a reputation for leprosy that serves his purpose. I remember inquiring of a Moorish doctor the treatment of a certain native's case. "Who shall arrest Allah's decree?" he began modestly. And he went on to say that the best way to treat an open wound was to put powdered sulphur upon it, and apply a light.[1] Horrible as this remedy seems, the worthy doctor believed in it, and had sent many a True Believer to—Paradise, I hope—by treating him on these lines. Meanwhile his profound confidence in himself, together with his knowledge and free use of the Koran, kept hostile criticism at bay.[2]

We turned back into the city, to see it in another aspect. The rapid rise of the sun had called the poorer workers to their daily tasks; buyers were congregating round the market stalls of the dealers in meat, bread, vegetables, and fruit. With perpetual grace to Allah for his gift of custom, the stall-keepers were parting with their wares at prices far below anything that rules even in the coast towns of the Sultan's country. The absence of my Lord Abd-el-Aziz and his court had tended to lower rates considerably. It was hard to realise that, while food cost so little, there were hundreds of men, women, and children within the city to whom

[1] The Sultan Mulaz-Abd-el-Aziz was once treated for persistent headache by a Moorish practitioner. The wise man's medicine exploded suddenly, and His Majesty had a narrow escape. I do not know whether the practitioner was equally fortunate.

[2] The doctors and magicians of Morocco have always been famous throughout the East. Nearly all the medicine men of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*, including the uncle of Aladdin, are from the Moghreb.

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one good meal a day was something almost unknown. Yet this was certainly the case.

Towering above the other buyers were the trusted slaves of the wazeers in residence—tall negroes from the far South for the most part—hideous men, whose black faces were made the more black by contrast with their white robes. They moved with a certain sense of dignity and pride through the ranks of the hungry freemen round them; clearly they were well contented with their lot—a curious commentary upon the European notions of slavery—based, to be sure, upon European methods in regard to it. The whole formed a marvellous picture, and how the pink roses, the fresh, green mint and thyme, the orange flowers and other blossoms, sweetened the narrow ways, garbage-strewn under foot and roofed overhead with dried leaves of the palm!

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ROUND ABOUT MARRAKESH

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THE ROOFS OF MARRAKESH

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CHAPTER VI

ROUND ABOUT MARRAKESH

"Speaking of thee comforts me, and thinking of thee makes me glad."—*Râod el Kartas.*

THE charm of Marrakesh comes slowly to the traveller, but it stays with him always, and colours his impressions of such other cities as may attract his wandering footsteps. So soon as he has left the plains behind on his way to the coast, the town's defects are relegated to the background of the picture his memory paints. He forgets the dirty lanes that serve for roads, the heaps of refuse at every corner, the pariah curs that howled or snapped at his horse's heels when he rode abroad, the roughness and discomfort of the accommodation, the poverty and disease that everywhere went hand in hand around him.

But he remembers and always will remember the city in its picturesque aspects. How can he forget Moorish hospitality, so lavishly exercised in patios where the hands of architect and gardener meet—those delightful gatherings of friends whose surroundings are recalled when he sees, even in the world of the West—

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Groups under the dreaming garden trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening star.

He will never forget the Kutubia tower flanking the mosque of the Library, with its three glittering balls that are solid gold, if you care to believe the Moors (and who should know better!), though the European authorities declare they are but gilded copper. He will hear, across all intervening sea and lands, the sonorous voices of the three blind mueddins who call True Believers to prayer from the adjacent minarets. By the side of the tower, that is a landmark almost from R'hamna's far corner to the Atlas Mountains, Yusuf ibn Tachfin, who built Marrakesh, enjoys his long, last sleep in a grave unnoticed and unhonoured by the crowds of men from strange, far-off lands, who pass it every day. Yet, if the conqueror of Fez and troubler of Spain could rise from nine centuries of rest, he would find but little change in the city he set on the red plain in the shadow of the mountains. The walls of his creation remain: even the broken bridge over the river dates, men say, from his time, and certainly the faith and works of the people have not altered greatly. Caravans still fetch and carry from Fez in the north to Timbuctoo and the banks of the Niger, or reach the Bab-er-rubb with gold and ivory and slaves from the eastern oases, that France has almost sealed up. The saints' houses are there still, though the old have yielded to the new. Storks are privileged, as from earliest times, to build on the flat roofs of the city houses, and, therefore, are still besought by amorous natives to carry love's greeting to

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the women who take their airing on the house-tops in the afternoon. Berber from the highlands; black man from the Draa; wiry, lean, enduring trader from Tarudant and other cities of the Sus; patient frugal Saharowi from the sea of sand,—no one of them has altered greatly since the days of the renowned Yusuf. And who but he among the men who built great cities in days before Saxon and Norman had met at Senlac, could look to find his work so little scarred by time, or disguised by change? Twelve miles of rampart surround the city still, if we include the walls that guard the Sultan's maze garden, and seven of the many gates Ibn Tachfin knew are swung open to the dawn of each day now.

After the Library mosque, with its commanding tower and modest yet memorable tomb, the traveller remembers the Sultan's palace, white-walled, green-tiled, vast, imposing; and the lesser mosque of Sidi bel Abbas, to whom the beggars pray, for it is said of him that he knew God. The city's hospital stands beside this good man's grave. And here one pays tribute also to great Mulai Abd el Kader Ijjilalli, yet another saint whose name is very piously invoked among the poor. The mosque by the Dukala gate is worthy of note, and earns the salutation of all who come by way of R'hamna to Marrakesh. The Kaisariyah lingers in the memory, and on hot days in the plains, when shade is far to seek, one recalls a fine fountain with the legend "drink and admire," where the water-carriers fill their goat-skins and all beggars congregate during the hours of fire.

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The Mellah, in which the town Jews live, is reached by way of the Olive Garden. It is the dirtiest part of Marrakesh, and, all things considered, the least interesting. The lanes that run between its high walls are full of indescribable filth; comparison with them makes the streets of Madinah and Kasbah almost clean. One result of the dirt is seen in the prevalence of a very virulent ophthalmia, from which three out of four of the Mellah's inhabitants seem to suffer, slightly or seriously. Few adults appear to take exercise, unless they are called abroad to trade, and when business is in a bad way the misery is very real indeed. A skilled workman is pleased to earn the native equivalent of fourteenpence for a day's labour, beginning at sunrise, and on this miserable pittance he can support a wife and family. Low wages and poor living, added to centuries of oppression, have made the Morocco Jew of the towns a pitiable creature; but on the hills, particularly among the Atlas villages, the People of the Book are healthy, athletic, and resourceful, able to use hands as well as head, and the trusted intermediary between Berber hillman and town Moor.

Being of the ancient race myself, I was received in several of the show-houses of the Mellah—places whose splendid interiors were not at all suggested by the squalid surroundings in which they were set. This is typical to some extent of all houses in Morocco, even in the coast towns, and greatly misleads the globe-trotter. There was a fine carving and colouring in many rooms, but the European furniture was, for the most part,

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A GATEWAY, MARRAKESH

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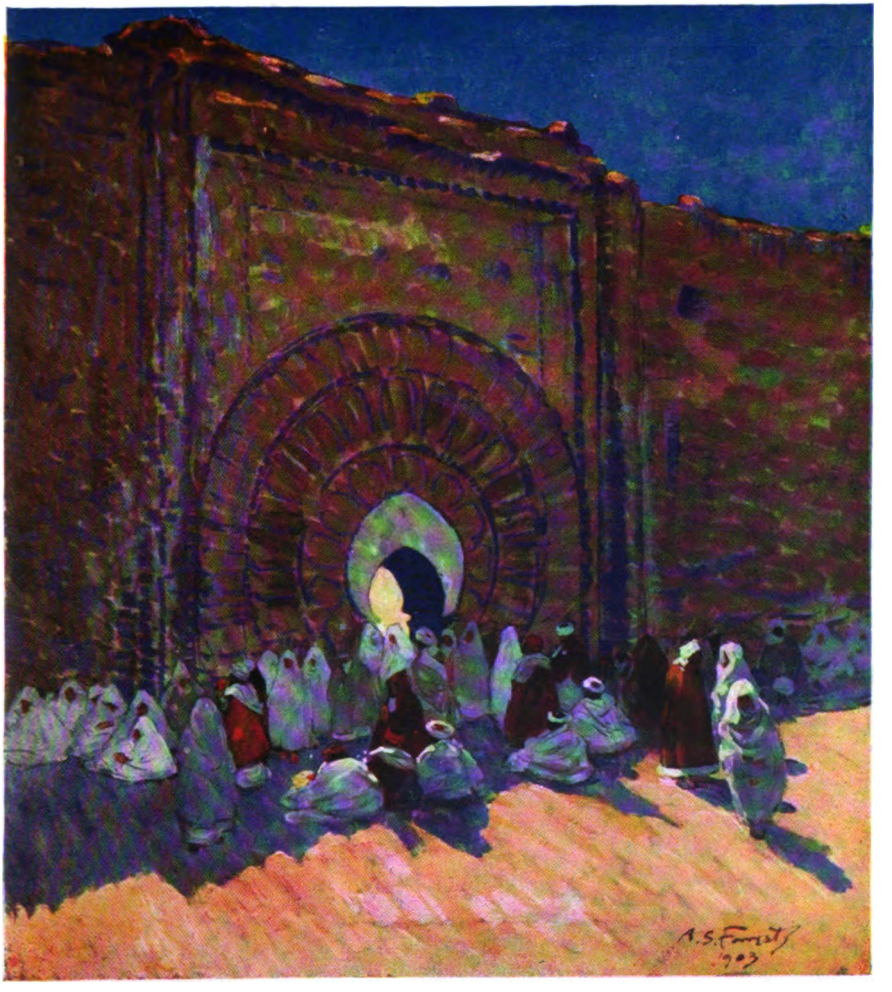

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wrongly used, and at best grotesquely out of place. Hygiene has not passed within the Mellah's walls, but a certain amount of Western tawdriness has. Patriarchal Jews of good stature and commanding presence had their dignity hopelessly spoilt by the big blue spotted handkerchief worn over the head and tied under the chin ; Jewesses in rich apparel seemed quite content with the fineness within their houses, and indifferent to the mire of the streets.

I visited three synagogues, one in a private house. The approaches were in every case disgusting, but the synagogues themselves were well kept, very old, and decorated with rare and curious memorial lamps, kept alight for the dead through the year of mourning. The benches were of wood, with straw mats for cover ; there was no place for women, and the seats themselves seemed to be set down without attempt at arrangement. The brasswork was old and fine, the scrolls of the Law were very ancient, but there was no sign of wealth, and little decoration. In the courtyard of the chief synagogue I found school-work in progress. Half a hundred intelligent youngsters were repeating the master's words, just as Mohammedan boys were doing in the Madinah, but even among these little ones ophthalmia was playing havoc, and doubtless the disease would pass from the unsound to the sound. Cleanliness would stamp out this trouble in a very little time, and preserve healthy children from infection. Unfortunately, the administration of this Mellah is exceedingly bad, and there is no reason to believe that it will improve.

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When the Elevated Court is at Marrakesh the demand for work helps the Jewish quarter to thrive, but since the Sultan went to Fez the heads of the Mellah seem to be reluctant to lay out even a few shillings daily to have the place kept clean. There are no statistics to tell the price that is paid in human life for this shocking neglect of the elementary decencies, but it must be a heavy one.

Business premises seem clean enough, though the approach to them could hardly be less inviting. You enter a big courtyard, and, if wise, remain on your horse until well clear of the street. The courtyard is wide and cared for, an enlarged edition of a patio, with big store-rooms on either side and stabling or a granary. Here also is a bureau, in which the master sits in receipt of custom, and deals in green tea that has come from India viâ England, and white sugar in big loaves, and coffee and other merchandise. He is buyer and seller at once, now dealing with a native who wants tea, and now with an Atlas Jew who has an ouadad skin or a rug to sell; now talking Shilha, the language of the Berbers, now the Moghrebbin Arabic of the Moors, and again debased Spanish or Hebrew with his own brethren. He has a watchful eye for all the developments that the day may bring, and while attending to buyer or seller can take note of all his servants are doing at the stores, and what is going out or coming in. Your merchant of the better class has commercial relations with Manchester or Liverpool; he has visited England and France;

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perhaps some olive-skinned, black-eyed boy of his has been sent to an English school to get the wider views of life and faith, and return to the Mellah to shock his father with both, and to be shocked in turn by much in the home life that passed uncriticised before. These things lead to domestic tragedies at times, and yet neither son nor father is quite to blame.

The best class of Jew in the Mellah has ideas and ideals, but outside the conduct of his business he lacks initiative. He believes most firmly in the future of the Jewish race, the ultimate return to Palestine, the advent of the Messiah. Immersed in these beliefs, he does not see dirt collecting in the streets and killing little children with the diseases it engenders. Gradually the grime settles on his faith too, and he loses sight of everything save commercial ends and the observances that orthodoxy demands. His, one fears, is a quite hopeless case. The attention of philanthropy might well turn to the little ones, however. For their sake some of the material benefits of modern knowledge should be brought to Jewry in Marrakesh. Schools are excellent, but children cannot live by school learning alone.

Going from the Mellah one morning I saw a strange sight. By the entrance to the salted place there is a piece of bare ground stretching to the wall. Here sundry young Jews in black djellabas sat at their ease, their long hair curled over their ears, and black caps on their heads in place of the handkerchiefs favoured by the elders of the community. One or two women

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were coming from the Jewish market, their bright dresses and uncovered faces a pleasing contrast to the white robes and featureless aspect of the Moorish women. A little Moorish boy, seeing me regard them with interest, remarked solemnly, "There go those who will never look upon the face of God's prophet," and then a shareef, whose portion in Paradise was of course reserved to him by reason of his high descent, rode into the open ground from the Madinah. I regret to record the fact that the holy man was drunk, whether upon haschisch or the strong waters of the infidel, I know not, and to all outward seeming his holiness alone sufficed to keep him on the back of the spirited horse he bestrode. He went very near to upsetting a store of fresh vegetables belonging to a True Believer, and then nearly crushed an old man against the wall. He raised his voice, but not to pray, and the people round him were in sore perplexity. He was too holy to remove by force and too drunk to persuade, so the crowd, realising that he was divinely directed, raised a sudden shout. This served. The hot-blooded Barb made a rush for the arcade leading to the Madinah and carried the drunken saint with him, cursing at the top of his voice, but sticking to his unwieldy saddle in manner that was admirable and truly Moorish. If he had not been holy he would have been torn from his horse, and, in native speech, would have "eaten the stick," for drunkenness is a grave offence in orthodox Morocco.

They have a short way with offenders in Moorish

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A COURTYARD, MARRAKESH

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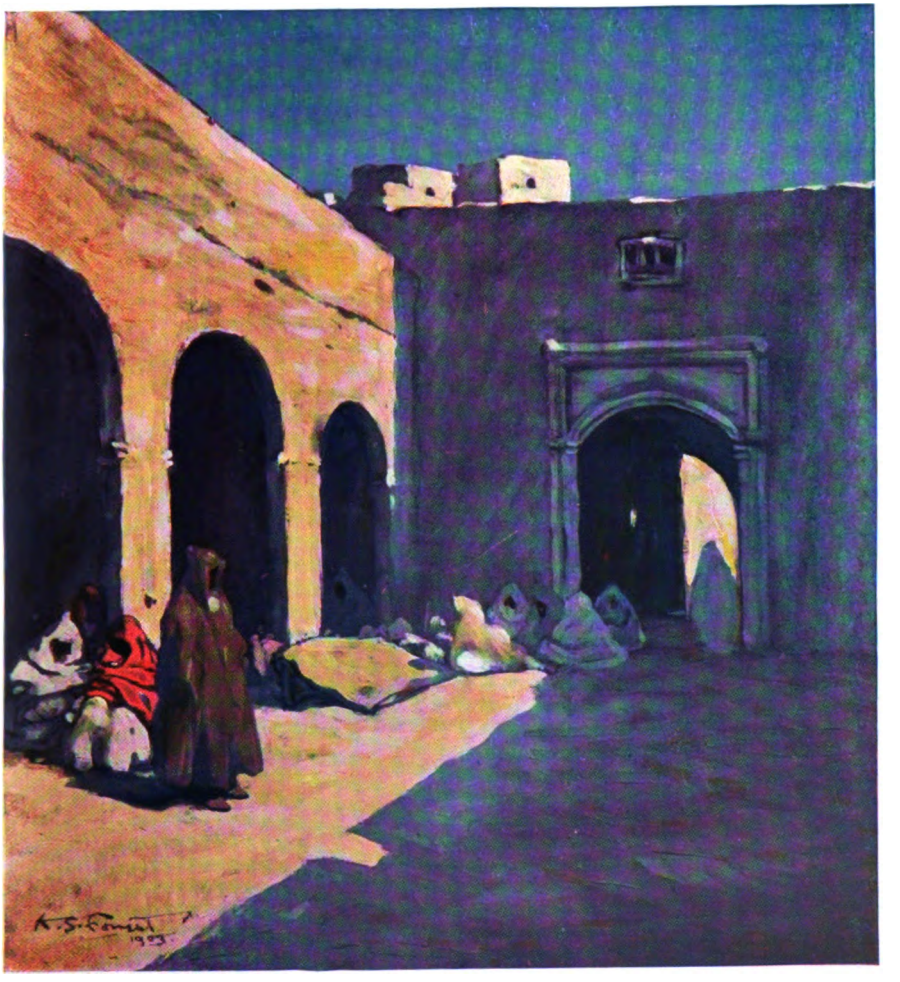

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cities. I remember seeing a man brought to the Kasbah of a northern town on a charge of using false measures. The case was held proven by the khalifa; the culprit was stripped to the waist, mounted on a lame donkey, and driven through the streets, while two stalwart soldiers, armed with sticks, beat him until he dropped to the ground. He was picked up more dead than alive, and thrown into prison.

There are two sorts of market in Marrakesh—the open market outside the walls, and the auction market in the Kaisariyah. The latter opens in the afternoon, by which time every little boxlike shop is tenanted by its proprietor. How he climbs into his place without upsetting his stores, and how, arrived there, he can sit for hours without cramp, are questions I have never been able to answer, though I have watched him scores of times. He comes late in the day to his shop, lets down one of the covering flaps, and takes his seat by the step inside it. The other flap has been raised and is kept up by a stick. Seated comfortably, he looks with dispassionate eye upon the gathering stream of life before him, and waits contentedly until it shall please Allah the One to send custom. Sometimes he occupies his time by reading in the Perspicuous Book; on rare occasions he will leave his little nest and make dignified way to the shop of an adool or scribe, who reads pious writings to a select company of devotees. In this way the morning passes, and in the afternoon the mart becomes crowded, country Moors riding right up to the entrance chains, and leaving their mules in the charge of slaves

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who have accompanied them on foot. Town buyers and country buyers, with a miscellaneous gathering of tribesmen from far-off districts, fill the bazaar, and then the merchants hand certain goods to dilals, as the auctioneers are called. The crowd divides on either side of the bazaar, leaving a narrow lane down the centre, and the dilals rush up and down with their wares,—linen, cotton and silk goods, carpets, skins or brassware, native daggers and pistols, saddles and saddle-cloths. The goods vary in every bazaar. The dilal announces the last price offered; a man who wishes to buy must raise it, and, if none will go better, he secures the bargain. A commission on all goods sold is taken at the door of the market by the municipal authorities. I notice on these afternoons the different aspects of the three classes represented in the bazaar. Shopkeepers and the officials by the gate display no interest at all in the proceedings: they might be miles from the scene, so far as their attitude is a clue. The dilals, on the other hand, are in furious earnest. They run up and down the narrow gangway proclaiming the last price at the top of their voices, thrusting the goods eagerly into the hands of possible purchasers, and always remembering the face and position of the man who made the last bid. They have a small commission on the price of everything sold, and assuredly they earn their wage. In contrast with the attitudes of both shopkeepers and auctioneers, the general public is inclined to regard the bazaar as a place of entertainment. Beggar lads, whose scanty rags constitute their sole possession, chaff the excited dilals, keeping carefully out

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of harm's way the while. Three-fourths of the people present are there to idle the afternoon hours, with no intention of making a purchase unless some unexpected bargain crosses their path. I notice that the dilals secure several of these doubtful purchasers by dint of fluent and eloquent appeals. When the last article has been sold and the crowd is dispersing, merchants arise, praise Allah, who in his wisdom sends good days and bad, step out of their shop, let down one flap and raise the other, lock the two with a huge key and retire to their homes.

I remember asking a Moor to explain why the Jews were so ill-treated and despised all over Morocco. The worthy man explained that the Koran declares that no True Believer might take Jew or Christian to be his friend, that the Veracious Book also assures the Faithful that Jews will be turned to pigs or monkeys for their unbelief, and that the metamorphosis will be painful. "Moreover," said the True Believer, who did not know that I was of the despised race, "do you not know that one of these cursed people tried to seize the throne in the time of the great Tafilatta?"

I pleaded ignorance.

"Do you not know the Feast of Scribes, that is held in Marrakesh and Fez?" he asked.

Again I had to make confession that, though I had heard about the Feast, I had never witnessed it.

"Only Allah is omniscient," he said by way of consolation. "Doubtless there are some small matters known to Nazarenes and withheld from us—strange though that may seem to the thoughtful.

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"In the name of the Most Merciful—know that there was a ruler in Taza before Mulai Ismail—Prince of the Faithful, he who overcame in the name of God—reigned in the land. Now this ruler[1] had a Jew for wazeer. When it pleased Allah to take the Sultan and set him in the pavilion of Mother of Pearl appointed for him in Paradise, in the shadow of the Tuba tree, this Jew hid his death from the people until he could seize the throne of Taza for himself and ride out under the M'dhal.[2] Then Mulai Ismail protested to the people, and the Tolba (scribes) arranged to remove the reproach from the land. So they collected forty of their bravest men and packed them in boxes—one man in a box. They put two boxes on a mule and drove the twenty mules to the courtyard of the palace that the Jew had taken for himself. The man in charge of the mules declared he had a present for the Sultan, and the Unbeliever, whose grave was to be the meeting-place of all the dogs of Taza, gave orders that the boxes should be brought in and set before him. This was done, and the cursed Jew prepared to gloat over rich treasure. But as each box was opened a talib rose suddenly, a naked sword in his hand, and falling bravely upon the unbelieving one, cut his body to pieces, while Shaitan hurried his soul to the furnace that is seven times heated and shall never cool.

"Then the Father of the Faithful, the Ever Victorious," continued the True Believer, "decreed that the tolba should have a festival. And every year they meet in

[1] Mulai Rashed II. [2] The royal umbrella.

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WELL IN MARRAKESH

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Marrakesh and Fez, and choose a talib who is to rule over them. The post is put up to auction ; he who bids highest is Sultan for a week. He rides abroad on a fine horse or mule, under a M'dhal, as though he were indeed My Lord Abd-el-Aziz himself. Black slaves on either side brush away the flies with their white clothes, soldiers await to do his bidding, he is permitted to make a request to the true Sultan, and our Master has open ear and full hand for the tolba, who kept the Moghreb from the Unbelievers, the inheritors of the Fire, against whom Sidna Mohammed has turned his face."

I arrived in Marrakesh just too late to witness the reign of the talib, but I heard that the successful candidate had paid thirty-two dollars for the post—a trifle less than five pounds in our money, at the rate of exchange then current. This money had been divided among the tolba. The governor of Marrakesh had given the lucky king one hundred dollars in cash, thirty sheep, twenty-five cones of sugar, forty jars of butter, and several sacks of flour. This procedure is peculiar to the Southern capital. In Fez the tolba kings collect taxes in person from every householder.

The talib's petition to the Sultan had been framed on a very liberal scale. He asked for a home in Saffi, exemption from taxes, and a place in the custom-house. The Sultan had not responded to the petition when I left the city ; he was closely beleaguered in Fez, and Bu Hamara was occupying Taza, the ancient city where the deed of the tolba

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had first instituted the quaint custom. My informant said there was little doubt but that his Shareefian majesty would grant all the requests, so the talib's investment of thirty-two dollars must be deemed highly profitable. At the same time I cannot find the story I was told confirmed by Moorish historians. No record to which I have had access tells of a Jewish king of Taza, though there was a Hebrew in high favour there in the time of Rasheed II. The details of the story told me are, as the American scribe said, probably attributable to Mr. Benjamin Trovato.

When the attractions of Kaisariyah palled, the markets beyond the walls never failed to revive interest in the city's life. The Thursday market outside the Bab al Khamees brought together a very wonderful crowd of men and goods. All the city's trade in horses, camels, and cattle was done here. The caravan traders bought or hired their camels, and there were fine animals for sale with one fore and one hind leg hobbled, to keep them from straying. The camels were always the most interesting beasts on view. For the most part their attendants were Saharowi, who could control them seemingly by voice or movement of the hand; but a camel needs no little care, particularly at feeding time, when he is apt to turn spiteful if precedence be given to an animal he does not like. They are marvellously touchy and fastidious creatures—quite childlike in many of their peculiarities.

The desert caravan trade is not what it was since the French occupied Timbuctoo and closed the oases of Tuat;

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A BAZAAR, MARRAKESH

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but I saw some caravans arrive from the interior—one of them from the sandy region where Mons. Lebaudy has set up his kingdom. How happy men and beasts seemed to be. I never saw camels looking so contented: the customary sneer had passed from their faces—or accumulated dust had blotted it out. On the day when the market is held in the open place beyond the Bab al Khamees, there is another big gathering within the city walls by the Jamáa Effina. Here acrobats and snake-charmers and story-tellers ply their trade, and never fail to find an audience. The acrobats come from Tarudant and another large city of the Sus that is not marked in the British War Office Map of Morocco dated 1889! Occasionally one of these clever tumblers finds his way to London, and is seen at the music halls there.

I remember calling on one Hadj Abdullah when I was in the North, and to my surprise he told me he spoke English, French, German, Spanish, Turkish, Moghrebbin Arabic, and Shilha. "I know London well," he said; "I have an engagement to bring my troupe of acrobats to the *Canterbury* and the *Oxford*. I am a member of a Masonic Lodge in Camberwell." Commonplace enough all this, but when you have ridden out of town to a little Moorish house on the hillside overlooking the Mediterranean, and are drinking green tea flavoured with mint, on a diwan that must be used with crossed legs, you hardly expect the discussion to be turned to London music-halls.

Snake-charmers make a strong appeal to the

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untutored Moorish crowd. Black cobras and spotted leffa snakes from the Sus are used for the performance. When the charmer allows the snakes to dart at him or even to bite, the onlookers put their hands to their foreheads and praise Sidi ben Aissa, a saint who lived in Mequinez when Mulai Ismail ruled, a pious magician whose power stands even to-day between snake-charmers and sudden death. The musician who accompanies the chief performer, and collects the *floos* offered by spectators, works his companion into a condition of frenzy until he does not seem to feel the teeth of the snakes; but as people who should be well informed declare that the poison bags are always removed before the snakes are used for exhibition, it is hard for the mere Unbeliever to render to Sidi ben Aissa the exact amount of credit that may be due to him.

The story-teller, whose legends are to be found in the "Thousand Nights and a Night," is generally a merry rogue with ready wit. His tales are told with a wealth of detail that would place them upon the index expurgatorius of the Western world, but men, women, and children crowd round to hear them, and if his tale lacks the ingredients most desired they do not hesitate to tell him so, whereupon he will respond at once to his critics, and add love or war in accordance with their instructions. One has heard of something like this in the serial market at home. His reward is scanty, like that of his fellow-workers, the acrobat and the snake charmer, but he has quite a professional

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A BRICKFIELD, MARRAKESH

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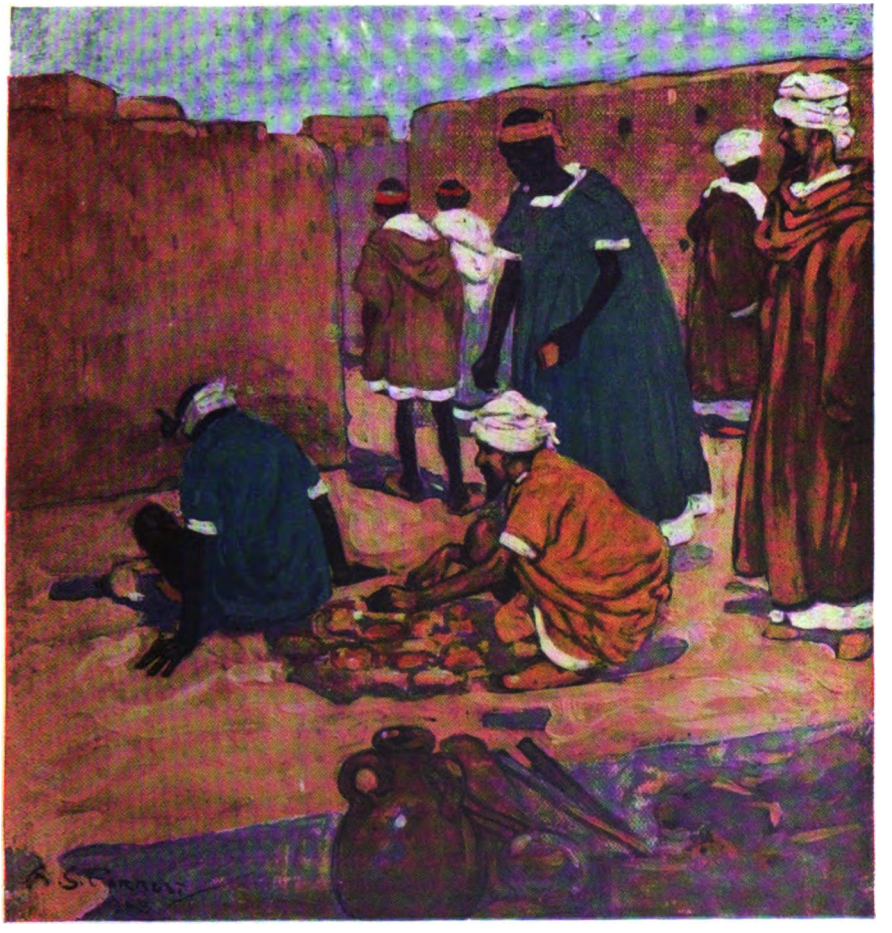

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manner, and stops at the most exciting points in his narrative for his companion to make a tour of the circle to collect fees. The quality of the adventures he retails is settled always by the price paid for them.

It is a strange sight, and unpleasant to the European, who believes that his morality, like his faith, is the only genuine article, to see young girls with antimony on their eyelids and henna on their nails, listening to stories that only the late Sir Richard Burton dared to render literally into the English tongue. While these children are young and impressionable they are allowed to run wild, but from the day when they become self-conscious they are strictly secluded.

Throughout Marrakesh one notes a spirit of industry. If a man has work, he seems to be happy and well content. Most traders are very courteous and gentle in their dealings, and many have a sense of humour that cannot fail to please. While in the city I ordered one or two lamps from a workman who had a little shop in the Madinah. He asked for three days, and on the evening of the third day I went to fetch them, in company with Salam. The workman, who had made them himself, drew the lamps one by one from a dark corner, and Salam, who has a hawk's eye, noticed that the glass of one was slightly cracked.

"Have a care, O Father of Lamps," he said; "the Englishman will not take a cracked glass."

"What is this," cried the Lamps' Father in great anger, "who sells cracked lamps? If there is a flaw in one of mine, ask me for two dollars."

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Salam held the lamp with cracked glass up against the light. "Two dollars," he said briefly. The tradesman's face fell. He put his tongue out and smote it with his open hand.

"Ah," he said mournfully, when he had admonished the unruly member, "who can set a curb upon the tongue?"[1]

[1] Cf. James iii. 8. But for a mere matter of dates, one would imagine that Luther detected the taint of Islam in James when he rejected his Epistle.

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THE SLAVE MARKET AT MARRAKESH

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A MOSQUE, MARRAKESH

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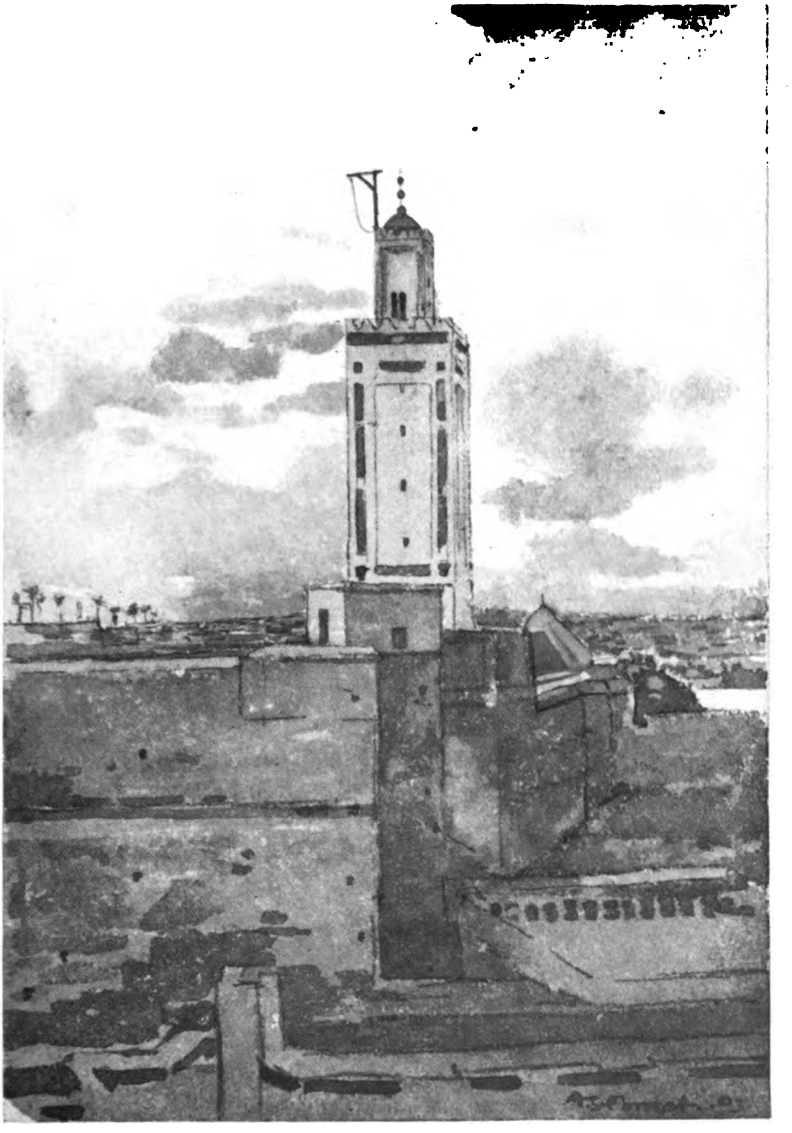

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CHAPTER VII

THE SLAVE MARKET AT MARRAKESH

As to your slaves, see that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear. And if they commit a fault which ye are not willing to forgive, then sell them, for they are the servants of Allah, and are not to be tormented.—*Mohammed's last Address.*

In the bazaars of the brass-workers and dealers in cotton goods, in the bazaars of the saddlers and of the leather-sellers,—in short, throughout the Kaisariyah, where the most important trade of Marrakesh is carried on,—the auctions of the afternoon are drawing to a close. The dilals have carried goods to and fro in a narrow path between two lines of True Believers, obtaining the best prices possible on behalf of the dignified merchants, who sit gravely in their boxlike shops beyond the reach of toil. No merchant seeks custom: he leaves the auctioneers to sell for him on commission, while he sits at ease, a stranger to elation or disappointment, in the knowledge that the success or failure of the day's market is decreed. Many articles have changed hands, but there is now a greater attraction for men with money outside the limited area of the

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Kaisariyah, and I think the traffic here passes before its time.

The hour of the sunset prayer is approaching. The wealthier members of the community leave many attractive bargains unpursued, and, heedless of the dilals' frenzied cries, set out for the Sok el Abeed. Wool market in the morning and afternoon, it becomes the slave market on three days of the week, in the two hours that precede the setting of the sun and the closing of the city gates; this is the rule that holds in Red Marrakesh.

I follow the business leaders through a very labyrinth of narrow, unpaved streets, roofed here and there with frayed and tattered palmetto-leaves that offer some protection, albeit a scanty one, against the blazing sun. At one of the corners where the beggars congregate and call for alms in the name of Mulai Abd el Kader Ijjilalli, I catch a glimpse of the great Kutubia tower, with pigeons circling round its glittering dome, and then the maze of streets, shutting out the view, claims me again. The path is by way of shops containing every sort of merchandise known to Moors, and of stalls of fruit and vegetables, grateful "as water-grass to herds in the June days." Past a turning in the crowded thoroughfare, where many Southern tribesmen are assembled, and heavily-laden camels compel pedestrians to go warily, the gate of the slave market looms portentous.

A crowd of penniless idlers, to whom admittance is denied, clamours outside the heavy door, while the city urchins fight for the privilege of holding the

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mules of wealthy Moors, who are arriving in large numbers in response to the report that the household of a great wazeer, recently disgraced, will be offered for sale. One sees portly men of the city wearing the blue cloth selhams that bespeak wealth, country Moors who boast less costly garments, but ride mules of easy pace and heavy price, and one or two high officials of the Dar el Makhzan. All classes of the wealthy are arriving rapidly, for the sale will open in a quarter of an hour.

The portals passed, unchallenged, the market stands revealed—an open space of bare, dry ground, hemmed round with tapia walls, dust-coloured, crumbling, ruinous. Something like an arcade stretches across the centre of the ground from one side to the other of the market. Roofless now and broken down, as is the outer wall itself, and the sheds, like cattle pens, that are built all round, it was doubtless an imposing structure in days of old. Behind the outer walls the town rises on every side. I see mules and donkeys feeding, apparently on the ramparts, but really in a fandak overlooking the market. The minaret of a mosque rises nobly beside the mules' feeding-ground, and beyond there is the white tomb of a saint, with swaying palm trees round it. Doubtless this zowia gives the Sok el Abeed a sanctity that no procedure within its walls can besmirch; and, to be sure, the laws of the saint's religion are not so much outraged here as in the daily life of many places more sanctified by popular opinion.

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On the ground, by the side of the human cattle pens, the wealthy patrons of the market seat themselves at their ease, arrange their djellabas and selhams in leisurely fashion, and begin to chat, as though the place were the smoking-room of a club. Water-carriers—lean, half-naked men from the Sus—sprinkle the thirsty ground, that the tramp of slaves and auctioneers may not raise too much dust. Watching them as they go about their work, with the apathy born of custom and experience, I have a sudden reminder of the Spanish bull-ring, to which the slave market bears some remote resemblance. The gathering of spectators, the watering of the ground, the sense of excitement, all strengthen the impression. There are no bulls in the *torils*, but there are slaves in the pens. It may be that the bulls have the better time. Their sufferings in life are certainly brief, and their careless days are very long drawn out. But I would not give the impression that the spectators here are assembled for amusement, or that my view of some of their proceedings would be comprehensible to them. However I may feel, the other occupants of this place are here in the ordinary course of business, and are certainly animated by no such fierce passions as thrill through the air of a plaza de toros. I am in the East but of the West, and "never the twain shall meet."

Within their sheds the slaves are huddled together. They will not face the light until the market opens. I catch a glimpse of bright colouring now and again, as some woman or child moves in the dim recesses of

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A WATER-SELLER, MARRAKESH

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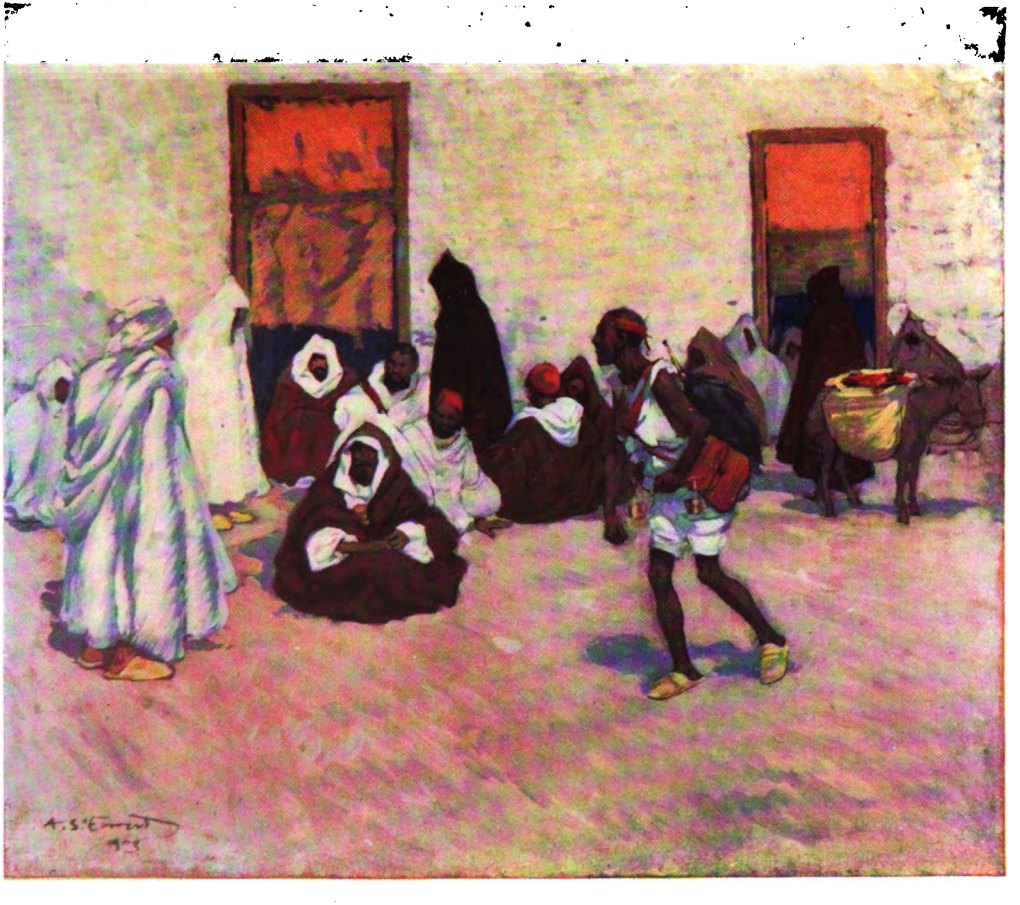

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the retreats, but there is no suggestion of the number or quality of the penned.

Two storks sail leisurely from their nest on the saint's tomb, and a little company of white ospreys passes over the burning market-place with such a wild, free flight, that the contrast between the birds and the human beings forces itself upon me. Now, however, there is no time for such thoughts; the crowd at the entrance parts to the right and left, to admit twelve grave men wearing white turbans and spotless djellabas. They are the dilals, in whose hands is the conduct of the sale.

Slowly and impressively these men advance in a line almost to the centre of the slave market, within two or three yards of the arcade, where the wealthy buyers sit expectant. Then the head auctioneer lifts up his voice, and prays, with downcast eyes and outspread hands. He recites the glory of Allah, the One, who made the heaven above and the earth beneath, the sea and all that is therein; his brethren and the buyers say Amen. He thanks Allah for his mercy to men in sending Mohammed the Prophet, who gave the world the True Belief, and he curses Shaitan, who wages war against Allah and his children. Then he calls upon Sidi bel Abbas, patron saint of Marrakesh, friend of buyers and sellers, who praised Allah so assiduously in days remote, and asks the saint to bless the market and all who buy and sell therein, granting them prosperity and length of days. And to these prayers, uttered with an intensity of devotion quite

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Mohammedan, all the listeners say Amen. Only to Unbelievers like myself,—to men who have never known, or knowing, have rejected Islam,—is there aught repellent in the approaching business; and Unbelievers may well pass unnoticed. In life the man who has the True Faith despises them; in death they become children of the Fire. Is it not so set down?

Throughout this strange ceremony of prayer I seem to see the bull-ring again, and in place of the dilals the cuadrillas of the Matadors coming out to salute, before the alguazils open the gates of the toril and the slaying begins. The dramatic intensity of either scene connects for me this slave market in Marrakesh with the plaza de toros in the shadow of the Giralda tower in Sevilla. Strange to remember now and here, that the man who built the Kutubia tower for this thousand-year-old-city of Yusuf ben Tachfin, gave the Giralda to Andalusia.

Prayers are over—the last Amen is said. The dilals separate, each one going to the pens he presides over, and calling upon their tenants to come forth. These selling men move with a dignity that is quite Eastern, and speak in calm and impressive tones. They lack the frenzied energy of their brethren who traffic in the bazaars.

Obedient to the summons, the slaves face the light, the sheds yield up their freight, and there are a few noisy moments, bewildering to the novice, in which the auctioneers place their goods in line, rearrange dresses, give children to the charge of adults, sort out men and

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ON THE ROAD TO THE SÔK EL ABEED

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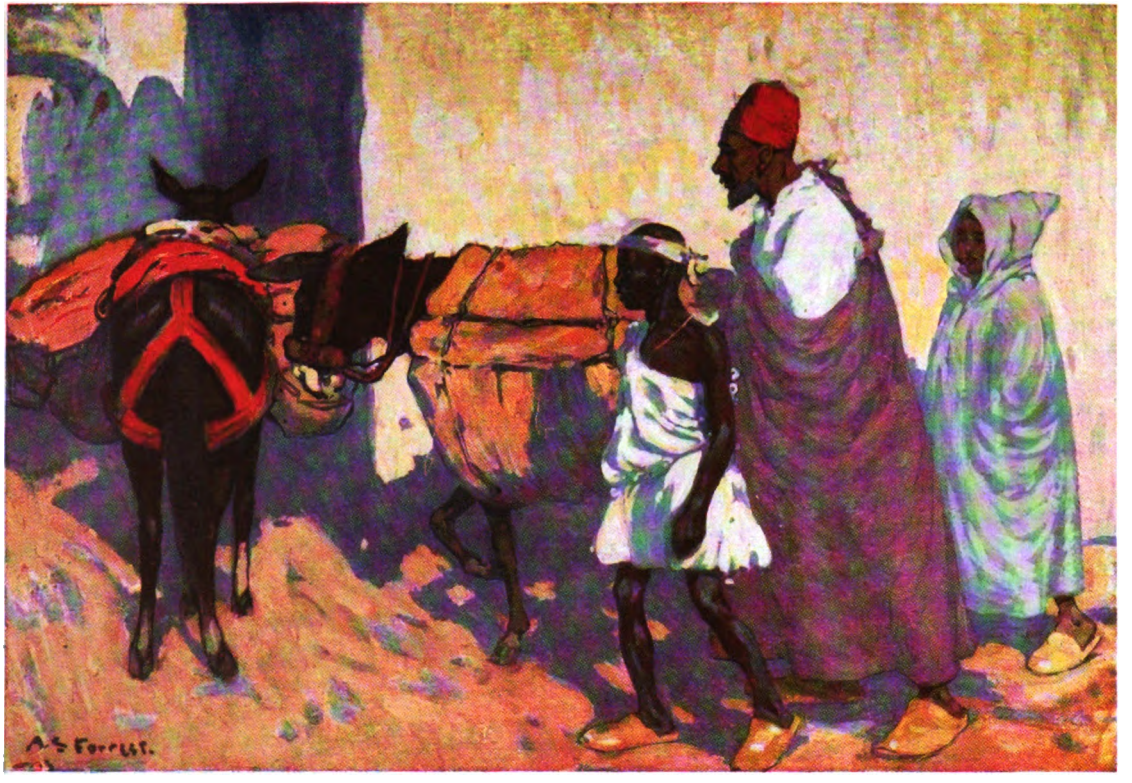

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women according to their age and value, and prepare for the promenade. The slaves will march round and round the circle of the buyers, led by the auctioneers, who will proclaim the latest bid and hand over any one of their charges to an intending purchaser, that he may make his examination before raising the price. In the procession now forming for the first parade, five, if not six, of the seven ages set out by the melancholy Jaques are represented. There are men and women who can no longer walk upright, however the dilal may insist; there are others of middle age, with years of active service before them; there are young men full of vigour and youth, fit for the fields, and young women, moving for once unveiled yet unrebuked, who will pass at once to the hareem. And there are children of every age, from babies who will be sold with their mothers to girls and boys upon the threshold of manhood and womanhood. All are dressed in bright colours and displayed to the best advantage, that the hearts of bidders may be moved and their purses opened widely.

"It will be a fine sale," says my neighbour, a handsome middle-aged Moor from one of the Atlas villages, who had chosen his place before I reached the market. "There must be well nigh forty slaves, and this is good, seeing that the Elevated Court is at Fez. It is because our Master—Allah send him more victories!—has been pleased to 'visit' Sidi Abdeslam, and send him to the prison of Mequinez. All the wealth he has extorted has been taken away from him by our Master, and he

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will see no more light. Twenty or more of these women are of his house."

Now each dilal has his people sorted out, and the procession begins. Followed by their bargains the dilals march round and round the market, and I understand why the dust was laid before the procession commenced.

Most of the slaves are absolutely free from emotion of any sort: they move round as stolidly as the blindfolded horses that work the water-wheels in gardens beyond the town, or the corn mills within its gates. I think the sensitive ones—and there are a few—must come from the household of the unfortunate Sidi Abdeslam, who was reputed to be a good master. Small wonder if the younger women shrink, and if the black visage seems to take on a tint of ashen grey, when a buyer, whose face is an open defiance of the ten commandments, calls upon the dilal to halt, and, picking one out as though she had been one of a flock of sheep, handles her as a butcher would, examining teeth and muscles, and questioning her and the dilal very closely about past history and present health. And yet the European observer must beware lest he read into incidents of this kind something that neither buyer nor seller would recognise. Novelty may create an emotion that facts and custom cannot justify.

"Ah, Tsamanni," says my gossip from the Atlas to the big dilal who led the prayers, and is in special charge of the children for sale, "I will speak to this one," and Tsamanni pushes a tiny little girl into his

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THE SLAVE MARKET

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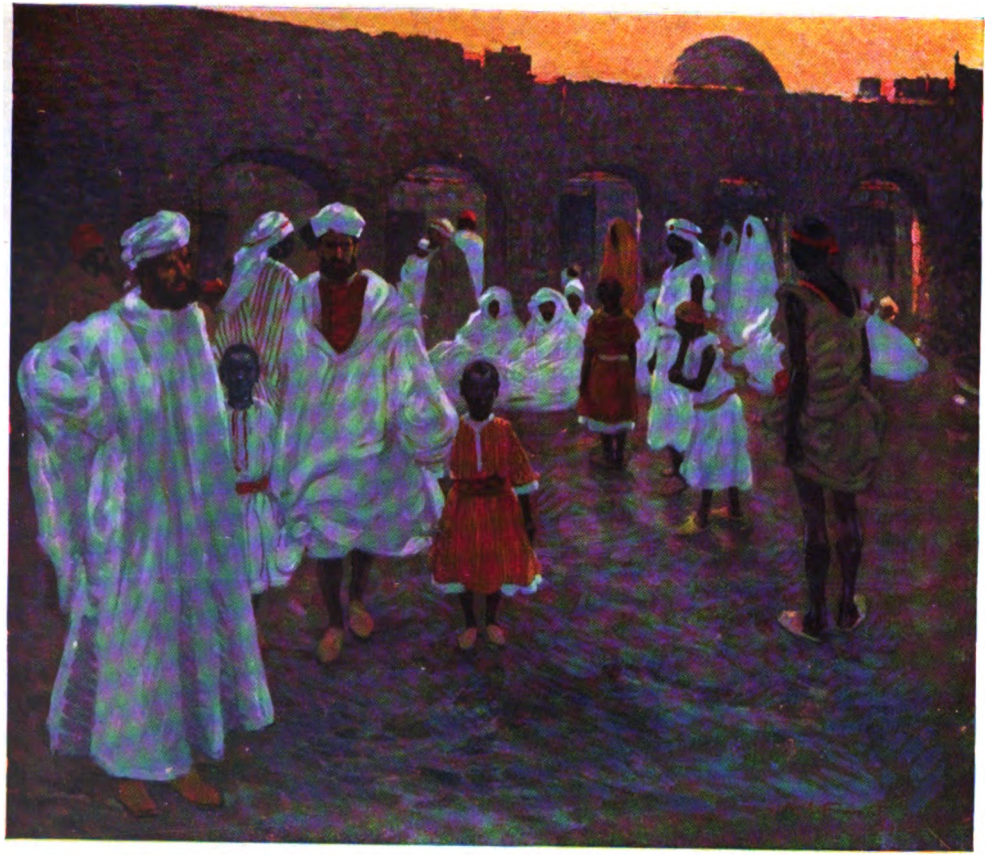

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arms. The child kisses the speaker's hand. Not at all unkindly the Moor takes his critical survey, and Tsamanni enlarges upon her merits.

"She does not come from the town at all," he says glibly, "but from Timbuctoo. It is more difficult than ever to get children from there. The accursed Nazarenes have taken the town, and the slave market droops. But this one is desirable: she understands needlework, she will be a companion for your house, and thirty-five dollars is the last price bid."

"One more dollar, Tsamanni. She is not ill-favoured, but she is poor and thin. Nevertheless say one dollar more," says the Moor.

"The praise to Allah, who made the world," says the dilal piously, and hurries round the ring, saying that the price of the child is now thirty-six dollars, and calling upon the buyers to go higher.

I learn that the dilal's commission is two and a half per cent on the purchase price, and there is a Government tax of five per cent. Slaves are sold under a warranty, and are returned if they are not properly described by the auctioneer. Bids must not be advanced by less than a Moorish dollar (about three shillings) at a time, and when a sale is concluded a deposit must be paid at once, and the balance on or shortly after the following day. Thin slaves will not fetch as much money as fat ones, for corpulence is regarded as the outward and visible sign of health as well as wealth by the Moor.

"I have a son of my house," says the Moor from

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the Atlas, with a burst of confidence quite surprising. "He is my only one, and must have a playfellow, so I am here to buy. In these days it is not easy to get what one wants. Everywhere the French. The caravans come no longer from Tuat—because of the French. From Timbuctoo it is the same thing. Surely Allah will burn these people in a fire of more than ordinary heat—a furnace that shall never cool. Ah, listen to the prices." The little girl's market-value has gone to forty-four dollars—say seven pounds ten shillings in English money at the current rate of exchange. It has risen two dollars at a time, and Tsamanni cannot quite cover his satisfaction. One girl, aged fourteen, has been sold for no less than ninety dollars after spirited bidding from two country kaids; another, two years older, has gone for seventy-six.

"There is no moderation in all this," says the Atlas Moor, angrily. "But prices will rise until our Lord the Sultan ceases to listen to the Nazarenes, and purges the land. Because of their Bashadors we can no longer have the markets at the towns on the coasts. If we do have one there, it must be held secretly, and a slave must be carried in the darkness from house to house. This is shameful for an unconquered people."

I am only faintly conscious of my companion's talk and action, as he bids for child after child, never going beyond forty dollars. Interest centres in the diminishing crowd of slaves who still follow the dilals round the market in monotonous procession.

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The attractive women and strong men have been sold, and have realised good prices. The old people are in little or no demand; but the auctioneers will persist until closing time. Up and down tramp the people nobody wants, burdens to themselves and their owners, the useless, or nearly useless men and women whose lives have been slavery for so long as they can remember. Even the water-carrier from the Sus country, who has been jingling his bright bowls together since the market opened, is moved to compassion, for while two old women are standing behind their dilal, who is talking to a client about their reserve price, I see him give them a free draught from his goat-skin water-barrel, and this kind action seems to do something to freshen the place, just as the mint and the roses of the gardeners freshen the alleys near the Kaisariyah in the heart of the city. To me, this journey round and round the market seems to be the saddest of the slaves' lives—worse than their pilgrimage across the deserts of the Wad Nun, or the Draa, in the days when they were carried captive from their homes, packed in panniers upon mules, forced to travel by night, and half starved. For then at least they were valued and had their lives before them, now they are counted as little more than the broken-down mules and donkeys left to rot by the roadside. And yet this, of course, is a purely Western opinion, and must be discounted accordingly.

It is fair to say that auctioneers and buyers treat the slaves in a manner that is not unkind. They handle

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them just as though they were animals with a market value that ill-treatment will diminish, and a few of the women are brazen, shameless creatures—obviously, and perhaps not unwisely, determined to do the best they can for themselves in any surroundings. These women are the first to find purchasers. The unsold adults and little children seem painfully tired; some of the latter can hardly keep pace with the auctioneer, until he takes them by the hand and leads them along with him. Moors, as a people, are wonderfully kind to children.

The procedure never varies. As a client beckons and points out a slave, the one selected is pushed forward for inspection, the history is briefly told, and if the bidding is raised the auctioneer, thanking Allah, who sends good prices, hurries on his way to find one who will bid a little more. On approaching an intending purchaser the slave seizes and kisses his hand, then releases it and stands still, generally indifferent to the rest of the proceedings.

"It is well for the slaves," says the Atlas Moor, rather bitterly, for the fifth and last girl child has gone up beyond his limit. "In the Mellah or the Madinah you can get labour for nothing, now the Sultan is in Fez. There is hunger in many a house, and it is hard for a free man to find food. But slaves are well fed. In times of famine and war free men die; slaves are in comfort. Why then do the Nazarenes talk of freeing slaves, as though they were prisoners, and seek to put barriers against the market, until at last the prices

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DILALS IN THE SLAVE MARKET

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DILALS IN THE SLAVE MARKET

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become foolish? Has not the Prophet said, 'He who behaveth ill to his slave shall not enter into Paradise'? Does that not suffice believing people? Clearly it was written, that my little Mohammed, my first born, my only one, shall have no playmate this day. No, Tsamanni: I will bid no more. Have I such store of dollars that I can buy a child for its weight in silver?"

The crowd is thinning now. Less than ten slaves remain to be sold, and I do not like to think how many times they must have tramped round the market. Men and women—bold, brazen, merry, indifferent—have passed to their several masters; all the children have gone; the remaining oldsters move round and round, their shuffling gait, downcast eyes, and melancholy looks in pitiful contrast to the bright clothes in which they are dressed for the sale, in order that their own rags may not prejudice purchasers.

Once again the storks from the saint's tomb pass over the market in large wide flight, as though to tell the story of the joy of freedom. It is the time of the evening promenade. The sun is setting rapidly and the sale is nearly at an end.

"Forty-one dollars—forty-one," cries the dilal at whose heels the one young and pretty woman who has not found a buyer limps painfully. She is from the Western Soudan, and her big eyes have a look that reminds me of the hare that was run down by the hounds a few yards from me on the marshes at home in the coursing season.

"Why is the price so low?" I ask.

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"She is sick," said the Moor coolly: "she cannot work—perhaps she will not live. Who will give more in such a case? She is of kaid Abdeslam's household, though he bought her a few weeks before his fall, and she must be sold. But the dilal can give no warranty, for nobody knows her sickness. She is one of the slaves who are bought by the dealers for the rock salt of El Djouf."

Happily the woman seems too dull or too ill to feel her own position. She moves as though in a dream—a dream undisturbed, for the buyers have almost ceased to regard her. Finally she is sold for forty-three dollars to a very old and infirm man.

"No slaves, no slaves," says the Atlas Moor impatiently: "and in the town they are slow to raise them." I want an explanation of this strange complaint.

"What do you mean when you say they are slow to raise them," I ask.

"In Marrakesh now," he explains, "dealers buy the healthiest slaves they can find, and raise as many children by them as is possible. Then, so soon as the children are old enough to sell, they are sold, and when the mothers grow old and have no more children, they too are sold, but they do not fetch much then."

This statement takes all words from me, but my informant sees nothing startling in the case, and continues gravely: "From six years old they are sold to be companions, and from twelve they go to the hareems. Prices are good—too high indeed; fifty-four dollars I must have paid this afternoon to purchase one, and when

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Mulai Mohammed reigned the price would have been twenty, or less, and for that one would have bought fat slaves. Where there is one caravan now, there were ten of old times."

Only three slaves now, and they must go back to their masters to be sent to the market on another day, for the sun is below the horizon, the market almost empty, and the guards will be gathering at the city gates. Two dilals make a last despairing promenade, while their companions are busy recording prices and other details in connection with the afternoon's business. The purchased slaves, the auctioneer's gaudy clothing changed for their own, are being taken to the houses of their masters. We who live within the city walls must hasten now, for the time of gate-closing is upon us, and one may not stay outside.

It has been a great day. Many rich men have attended personally, or by their agents, to compete for the best favoured women of the household of the fallen kaid, and prices in one or two special cases ran beyond forty pounds (English money), so brisk was the bidding.

Outside the market-place a country Moor of the middle class is in charge of four young boy slaves, and is telling a friend what he paid for them. I learn that their price averaged eleven pounds apiece in English currency—two hundred and eighty dollars altogether in Moorish money, that they were all bred in Marrakesh by a dealer who keeps a large establishment of slaves, as one in England might keep a stud farm, and sells the children as they grow up. The purchaser of the

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quartette is going to take them to the North. He will pass the coming night in a fandak, and leave as soon after daybreak as the gates are opened. Some ten days' travel on foot will bring him to a certain city, where his merchandise should fetch four hundred dollars. The lads do not seem to be disturbed by the sale, or by thoughts of their future, and the dealer himself seems to be as near an approach to a commercial traveller as I have seen in Morocco. To him the whole transaction is on a par with selling eggs or fruit, and while he does not resent my interest, he does not pretend to understand it.

From the minaret that overlooks the mosque the mueddin calls for the evening prayer; from the side of the Kutubia Tower and the minaret of Sidi bel Abbas, as from all the lesser mosques, the cry is taken up. Lepers pass out of the city on their way to El-hara; beggars shuffle off to their dens; storks standing on the flat house-tops survey the familiar scene gravely but with interest. Doubtless the dilals and all who sent their slaves to the market to be sold this afternoon will respond to the mueddins' summons with grateful hearts, and Sidi bel Abbas, patron saint of Red Marrakesh, will hardly go unthanked.

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GREEN TEA AND POLITICS

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ON THE HOUSE-TOP, MARRAKESH

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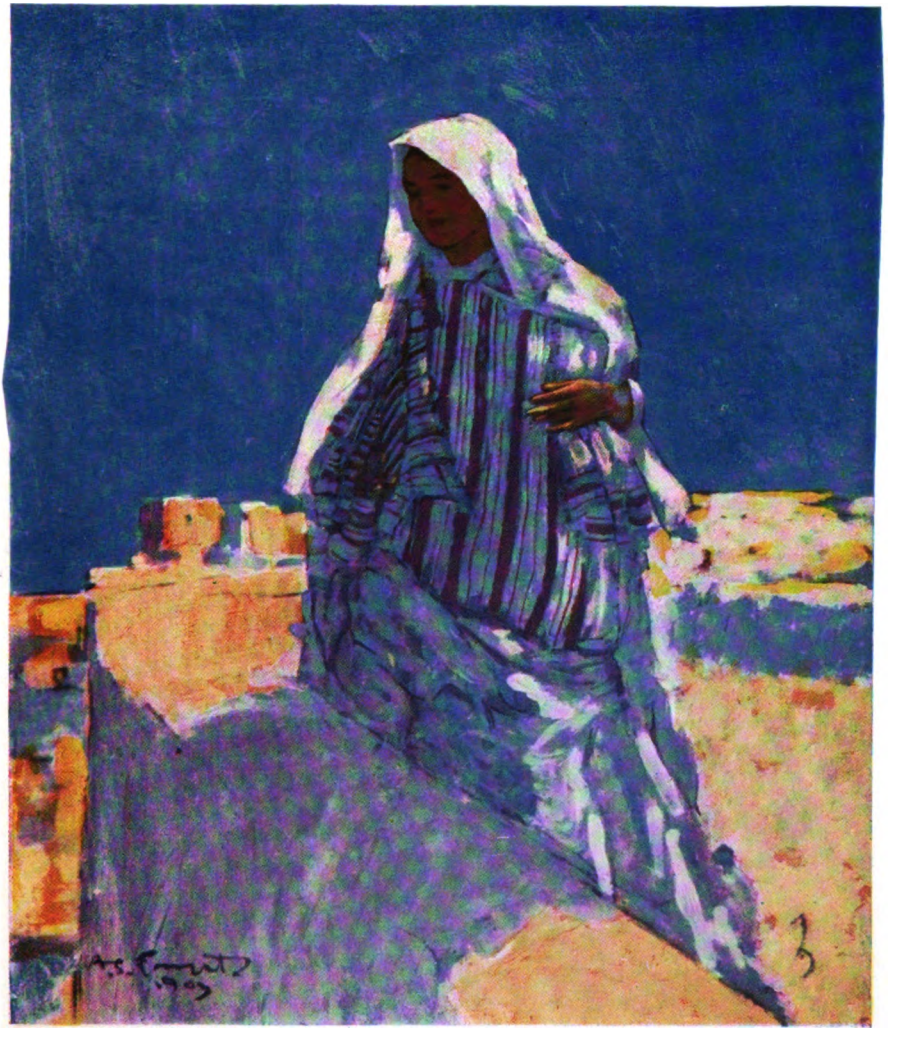

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CHAPTER VIII

GREEN TEA AND POLITICS

Whither resorting from the vernal Heat
Shall Old Acquaintance Old Acquaintance greet,
Under the Branch that leans above the Wall
To shed his Blossom over head and feet.

The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

He was a grave personable Moor of middle age, and full of the dignity that would seem to be the birthright of his race. His official position gave him a certain knowledge of political developments without affecting his serene outlook upon life. Whether he sat outside the Kasbah of his native town and administered the law according to his lights, or, summoned to the capital, rode attended so far as the Dar el Makhzan, there to take his part in a council of the Sultan's advisers, or whether, removed for a time from cares of office, he rested at ease among his cushions as he was doing now, this Moorish gentleman's placid and unruffled features would lead the Western observer to suppose that he was a very simple person with no sort of interest in affairs. I had occasion to know him, however, for a statesman, after the Moorish fashion—a keen if resigned observer

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of the tragic-comedy of his country's politics, and a pious man withal, who had visited Mecca in the month that is called Shawall, and had cast stones on the hill of Arafat, as the custom is among True Believers. Some years had passed since our first meeting, when I was the bearer of a letter of introduction written by a high official in the intricate Arabic character. It began: "Praise be to God! The blessing of Allah on our Lord Mohammed, and his peace upon Friends and Followers." Irrelevant perhaps all this, but the letter had opened the portals of his house to me, and had let loose for my benefit thoughts not lightly to be expressed.

Now we sat side by side on cushions in his patio, partly shaded by a rose tree that climbed over trellis-work and rioted in bud and blossom. We drank green tea flavoured with mint from tiny glasses that were floridly embossed in gilt. Beyond the patio there was a glimpse of garden ablaze with colour; we could hear slaves singing by the great Persian water-wheel, and the cooing of doves from the shaded heart of trees that screened a granary.

"Since Mulai el Hasan died," said the Hadj quietly, "since that Prince of Believers went to his Pavilion in Paradise, set among rivers in an orchard of never-failing fruit, as is explained in the Most Perspicuous Book,[1] troubles have swept over this land, even as El Jerad, the

[1] "In Paradise are rivers of incorruptible water; and rivers of milk, the taste whereof changes not; and rivers of wine, pleasant unto those who drink; and rivers of clarified honey; and in Paradise the faithful shall have all kinds of fruits, and pardon from their God."—Al Koran; Sura 47, "Mohammed."

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locust, comes upon it before the west wind has risen to blow him out to sea."

He mused awhile, as though the music of the garden pleased him.

"Even before the time of my Lord el Hasan," he went on, "there had been troubles enough. I can remember the war with Spain, though I was but a boy. My father was among those who fell at Wad Ras on the way to Tanjah of the Nazarenes. But then your country would not permit these Spanish dogs to steal our land, and even lent the money to satisfy and keep them away. This was a kindly deed, and Mulai Mohammed, our Victorious Master, opened his heart to your Bashador[1] and took him to his innermost councils. And I can remember that great Bashador of yours when he came to this city and was received in the square by the Augdal gardens. Our Master the Sultan came before him on a white horse[2] to speak gracious words under the M'dhal, that shades the ruling House.

"A strong man was our Master the Sultan, and he listened carefully to all your Bashador said, still knowing in his heart that this country is not as the land of the Nazarenes, and could not be made like it in haste. His wazeers feared change, the Ulema[3] opposed it so

[1] The late Sir John Drummond Hay, whose name is honourably remembered to this day throughout the Moghreb.

[2] When a Sultan appears in public on a white horse, it is for sign that he is pleased; a black horse, on the other hand, is ominous to them that understand.

[3] Literally "Learned Ones," a theological cabinet, the number of whose members is known to no man, the weight of whose decisions is felt throughout Morocco.

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far as they dared, and that you know is very far, and nothing could be done rapidly after the fashion of the West. My Lord understood this well.

"Then that King of the Age and Prince of True Believers fulfilled his destiny and died, and my Lord el Hasan, who was in the South, reigned in his stead.[1] And the troubles that now cover the land began to grow and spread."

He sipped his tea with grave pleasure. Two female slaves were peering at the Infidel through the branches of a lemon tree, just beyond the patio, but when their master dropped his voice the heads disappeared suddenly, as though his words had kept them in place. In the depths of the garden close, Oom el Hasan, the nightingale, awoke and trilled softly. We listened awhile to hear the notes "ring like a golden jewel down a golden stair."

"My Lord el Hasan," continued the Hadj, "was ever on horseback; with him the powder was always speaking. First Fez rejected him, and he carried fire and sword to that rebellious city. Then Er-Riff refused to pay tribute and he enforced it—Allah make his kingdom eternal. Then this ungrateful city rebelled against his rule and the army came south and fed the spikes of the city gate with the heads of the unfaithful. Before he had rested, Fez was insolent once again, and on the road north our Master, the Ever Victorious, was (so to say, as the irreligious see it) defeated by the Illegitimate men from Ghaita, rebels against Allah, all,

[1] 1873-94.

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A HOUSE INTERIOR, MARRAKESH

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and his house[1] was carried away. There were more campaigns in the North and in the South, and the Shareefian army ate up the land, so that there was a famine more fatal than war. After that came more fighting, and again more fighting. My lord sought soldiers from your people and from the French, and he went south to the Sus and smote the rebellious kaids from Tarudant to Iligh. So it fell out that my Lord was never at peace with his servants, but the country went on as before, with fighting in the north and the south and the east and the west. The devil ships of the Nazarene nations came again and again to the bay of Tanjah to see if the Prince of the Faithful were indeed dead, as rumour so often stated. But he was strong, my Lord el Hasan, and not easy to kill. In the time of a brief sickness that visited him the French took the oases of Tuat, which belongs to the country just so surely as does this our Marrakesh. They have been from times remote a place of resting for the camels, like Tindouf in the Sus. But our Master recovered his lordship with his health, and the French went back from our land. After that my Lord el Hasan went to Tafilalt over the Atlas, never sparing himself. And when he returned to this city, weary and very sick, at the head of an army that lacked even food and clothing, the Spaniards were at the gates of Er-Riff once more, and the tribes were out like a fire of thorns over the northern roads. But because the span allotted him by destiny was fulfilled, and also because he was worn out and would not

[1] Hareem.

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rest, my Lord Hasan died near Tadla; and Ba Ahmad, his chief wazeer, hid his death from the soldiers until his son Abd-el-Aziz was proclaimed."

There was a pause here, as though my host were overwhelmed with reflections and was hard driven to give sequence to his narrative. "Our present Lord was young," he continued at last thoughtfully; "he was a very young man, and so Ba Ahmad spoke for him and acted for him, and threw into prison all who might have stood before his face. Also, as was natural, he piled up great stores of gold, and took to his hareem the women he desired, and oppressed the poor and the rich, so that many men cursed him privately. But for all that Ba Ahmad was a wise man and very strong. He saw the might of the French in the East, and of the Bashadors who pollute Tanjah in the North; he remembered the ships that came to the waters in the West, and he knew that the men of these ships want to seize all the foreign lands, until at last they rule the earth even as they rule the sea. Against all the wise men of the Nazarenes who dwell in Tanjah the wazeer fought in the name of the Exalted of God,[1] so that no one of them could settle on this land to take it for himself and break into the bowels of the earth. To be sure, in Wazzan and far in the Eastern country the accursed French grew in strength and in influence, for they gave protection, robbing the Sultan of his subjects. But they took little land, they sent few to

[1] One of the titles of a Sultan. The "Lofty Portal" ("Sublime Porte") and the "Sublime Presence" are among the others.

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Court, the country was ours until the wazeer had fulfilled his destiny and died. Allah pardon him, for he was a man, and ruled this country, as his Master before him, with a rod of very steel."

"But," I objected, "you told me formerly that while he lived no man's life or treasure was safe, that he extorted money from all, that he ground the faces of the rich and the poor, that when he died in this city, the Marrakshis said 'A dog is dead.' How now can you find words to praise him?"

"The people cry out," explained the Hadj calmly; "they complain, but they obey. In the Moghreb it is for the people to be ruled as it is for the rulers to govern. Shall the hammers cease to strike because the anvil cries out? Truly the prisons of my Lord Abd-el-Aziz were full while Ba Ahmad ruled, but all who remained outside obeyed the law. No man can avoid his fate, even my Lord el Hasan, a fighter all the days of his life, loved peace and hated war. But his destiny was appointed with his birth, and he, the peaceful one, drove men yoked neck and neck to fight for him, even a whole tribe of the rebellious, as these eyes have seen. While Ba Ahmad ruled from Marrakesh all the Moghreb trembled, but the roads were safe, as in the days of Mulai Ismail,—may God have pardoned him,—the land knew quiet seasons of sowing and reaping, the expeditions were but few, and it is better for a country like ours that many should suffer than that none should be at rest."

I remained silent, conscious that I could not hope

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to see life through my host's medium. It was as though we looked at his garden through glasses of different colour. And perhaps neither of us saw the real truth of the problem underlying what we are pleased to call the Moorish Question.

"When the days of the Grand Wazeer were fulfilled," the Hadj continued gravely, "his enemies came into power. His brother the War Minister and his brother the Chamberlain died suddenly, and he followed them within the week. No wise man sought too particularly to know the cause of their death. Christians came to the Court Elevated by Allah, and said to my Lord Abd-el-Aziz, 'Be as the Sultans of the West.' And they brought him their abominations, the wheeled things that fall if left alone, but support a man who mounts them, as I suppose, in the name of Shaitan; the picture boxes that multiply images of True Believers and, being as the work of painters,[1] are wisely forbidden by the Far Seeing Book; carriages drawn by invisible djinoon, who scream and struggle in their fiery prison but must stay and work, small sprites that dance and sing.[2] The Christians knew that my Lord was but a young man, and so they brought these things, and Abd-el-Aziz gave them of the country's riches, and conversed with them familiarly, as

[1] Mohammed said: "Every painter is in Hell Fire, and Allah will appoint a person at the day of Resurrection to punish him for every picture he shall have drawn, and he shall be punished in Hell. So, if ye must make pictures, make them of trees and things without souls."

[2] The reader will recognise the Hadj's reference to bicycles, cameras, motor-cars, and other mechanical toys.

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A GLIMPSE OF THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS

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though they had been of the house of a Grand Shareef. But in the far east of the Moghreb the French closed the oases of Tuat and Tidikelt without rebuke, and burnt Ksor and destroyed the Faithful with guns containing green devils,[1] and said, 'We do all this that we may venture abroad without fear of robbers.' Then my Lord sent the War Minister, the kaid Maheddi el Menebhi, to London, and he saw your Sultan face to face. And your Sultan's wazeers said to him, 'Tell the Lord of the Moghreb to rule as we rule, to gather his taxes peaceably and without force, to open his ports, to feed his prisoners, to follow the wisdom of the West. If he will do this, assuredly his kingdom shall never be moved.' Thereafter your Sultan's great men welcomed the kaid yet more kindly, and showed him all that Allah the One had given them in his mercy, their palaces, their workplaces, their devil ships that move without sails over the face of the waters, and their unveiled women who pass without shame before the faces of men. And though the kaid said nothing, he remembered all these things.

"When he returned, and by the aid of your own Bashador in Tanjah prevailed over the enemies who had set snares in his path while he fared abroad, he stood up before my Lord and told him all he had seen. Thereupon my Lord Abd-el-Aziz sought to change that which had gone before, to make a new land as quickly as the father of the red legs[2] builds a new nest, or the boar of the Atlas whom the hunter has disturbed finds a new lair. And the land grew confused. It

[1] Melinite shells.

[2] The stork.

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was no more the Moghreb, but it assuredly was not as the lands of the West.

"In the beginning of the season of change the French were angry. 'All men shall pay an equal tax throughout my land,' said the King of the Age, and the Bashador of the French said, 'Our protected subjects shall not yield even a handful of green corn to the gatherer.' Now when the people saw that the tax-gatherers did not travel as they were wont to travel, armed and ready to kill, they hardened their hearts and said, 'We will pay no taxes at all, for these men cannot overcome us.' So the tribute was not yielded, and the French Bashador said to the Sultan, 'Thou seest that these people will not pay, but we out of our abundant wealth will give all the money that is needed. Only sign these writings that set forth our right to the money that is brought by Nazarenes to the seaports, and everything will be well.'

"So the Sultan set his seal upon all that was brought before him, and the French sent gold to his treasury and more French traders came to his Court, and my Lord gave them the money that had come to him from their country, for more of the foolish and wicked things they brought. Then he left Marrakesh and went to Fez; and the Rogui, Bu Hamara,[1] rose up and waged war against him."

The Hadj sighed deeply, and paused while fresh tea was brought by a coal-black woman slave, whose colour

[1] Literally, "Father of the she-ass," the Pretender who conducted a successful campaign against the Sultan in 1902 and 1903, and is still an active enemy of the Filali dynasty.

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was accentuated by the scarlet *rida* upon her head, and the broad silver anklets about her feet. When she had retired and we were left alone once more, my host continued :—

"You know what happened after. My Lord Abd-el-Aziz made no headway against the Rogui, who is surely assisted by devils of the air and by the devils of France. North and south, east and west, the Moors flocked to him, for they said, 'The Sultan has become a Christian.' And to-day my Lord has no more money, and no strength to fight the Infidel, and the French come forward, and the land is troubled everywhere. But this is clearly the decree of Allah the All Wise, and if it is written that the days of the Filali Shareefs are numbered, even my Lord will not avoid his fate."

I said nothing, for I had seen the latter part of Morocco's history working itself out, and knew that the improved relations between Great Britain and France had their foundation in the change of front that kept our Foreign Office from doing for Morocco what it has done for other states divided against themselves, and what it had promised Morocco, without words, very clearly. Then, again, it was obvious to me, though I could not hope to explain it to my host, that the Moor, having served his time, had to go under before the wave of Western civilisation. Morocco has held out longer than any other kingdom of Africa, not by reason of its own strength, but because the rulers of Europe could not afford to see the Mediterranean balance of power seriously disturbed. Just as Mulai

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Ismail praised Allah publicly two centuries ago for giving him strength to drive out the Infidel, when the British voluntarily relinquished their hold upon Tangier, so successive Moorish Sultans have thought that they have held Morocco for the Moors by their own power. And yet, in very sober truth, Morocco has been no more than one of the pawns in the diplomatic game these many years past.

We who know and love the country, finding in its patriarchal simplicity so much that contrasts favourably with the hopeless vulgarity of our own civilisation, must recognise in justice the great gulf lying between a country's aspect in the eyes of the traveller and in the mind of the politician.

Before we parted, the Hadj, prefacing his remark with renewed assurance of his personal esteem, told me that the country's error had been its admission of strangers. Poor man, his large simple mind could not realise that no power his master held could have kept them out. He told me on another occasion that the great wazeers who had opposed the Sultan's reforms were influenced by fear, lest Western ideas should alter the status of their womenkind. They had heard from all their envoys to Europe how great a measure of liberty is accorded to women, and were prepared to rebel against any reform that might lead to compulsory alteration of the system under which women live—too often as slaves and playthings — in Morocco. My friend's summary of his country's recent history is by no means complete, and, if he could revise it here would

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A MARRAKSHI

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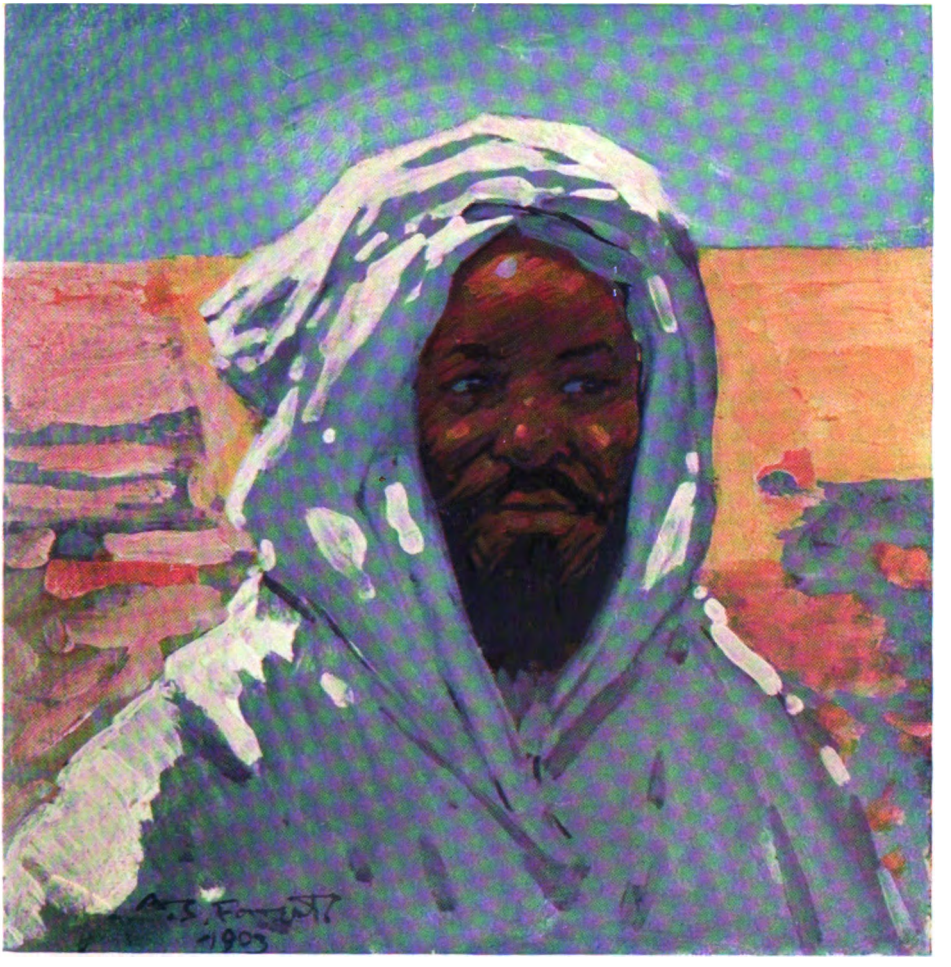

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doubtless have far more interest. But it seemed advisable to get the Moorish point of view, and, having secured the curious elusive thing, to record it as nearly as might be.

Sidi Boubikir seldom discussed politics. "I am in the South and the trouble is in the North," said he. "Alhamdolillah,[1] I am all for my Lord Abd-el-Aziz. In the reign of his grandfather I made money, when my Lord his father ruled—upon him the Peace—I made money, and now to-day I make money. Shall I listen then to Pretenders and other evil men? The Sultan may have half my fortune."

I did not suggest what I knew to be true, that the Sultan would have been more than delighted to take him at his word, for I remembered the incident of the lampmaker's wager. A considerable knowledge of Moghrebbin Arabic, in combination with hypnotic skill of a high order, would have been required to draw from Boubikir his real opinions of the outlook. Not for nothing was he appointed British political agent in South Morocco. The sphinx is not more inscrutable.

One night his son came to the Dar al Kasdir and brought me an invitation from Sidi Boubikir to dine with him on the following afternoon. Arrived before the gate of his palace at the time appointed, two o'clock, we found the old diplomat waiting to welcome us. He wore a fine linen djellaba of dazzling whiteness, and carried a scarlet geranium in his hand. "You are welcome," he said gravely, and led the way through a

[1] "The Praise to Allah."

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long corridor, crying aloud as he went, "Make way, make way," for we were entering the house itself, and it is not seemly that a Moorish woman, whether she be wife or concubine, should look upon a stranger's face. Yet some few lights of the hareem were not disposed to be extinguished altogether by considerations of etiquette, and passed hurriedly along, as though bent upon avoiding us and uncertain of our exact direction. The women-servants satisfied their curiosity openly until my host suddenly commented upon the questionable moral status of their mothers, and then they made haste to disappear, only to return a moment later and peep round corners and doorways, and giggle and scream—as if they had been Europeans of the same class.

Sidi Boubikir passed from room to room of his great establishment and showed some of its treasures. There were great piles of carpets and vast quantities of furniture that must have looked out at one time in their history upon the crowds that throng the Tottenham Court Road; I saw chairs, sofas, bedsteads, clocks, and sideboards, all of English make. Brought on camels through Dukala and R'hamna to Marrakesh, they were left to fill up the countless rooms without care or arrangement, though their owner's house must hold more than fifty women, without counting servants. Probably when they were not quarrelling or dying their finger nails, or painting their faces after a fashion that is far from pleasing to European eyes, the ladies of the hareem passed their days lying on cushions, playing the gimbri[1] or eating sweetmeats.

[1] A Moorish lute.

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In one room on the ground-floor there was a great collection of mechanical toys. Sidi Boubikir explained that the French Commercial Attaché had brought a large number to the Sultan's palace, and that my Lord Abd-el-Aziz had rejected the ones before us. With the curious childish simplicity that is found so often among the Moors of high position, Boubikir insisted upon winding up the clock-work apparatus of nearly all the toys. Then one doll danced, another played a drum, a third went through gymnastic exercises, and the toy orchestra played the Marseillaise, while from every adjacent room veiled figures stole out cautiously, as though this room in a Moorish house were a stage and the shrouded visitors were the chorus entering mysteriously from unexpected places. The old man's merriment was very real and hearty, so genuine, in fact, that he did not notice how his women-folk were intruding until the last note sounded. Then he turned round and the swathed figures disappeared suddenly as ghosts at cockcrow.

Though it was clear that Sidi Boubikir seldom saw half the rooms through which we hurried, the passion for building, that seizes all rich Moors, held him fast. He was adding wing after wing to his vast premises, and would doubtless order more furniture from London to fill the new rooms. No Moor knows when it is time to call a halt and deem his house complete, and so the country is full of palaces begun by men who fell from power or died leaving the work unfinished. The Grand Wazeer Ba Ahmad left a palace nearly as big as the

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Dar el Makhzan itself, and since he died the storks that build upon the flat roofs have been its only occupants. So it is with the gardens, whose many beauties he did not live to enjoy. I rode past them one morning, noted all manner of fruit trees blossoming, heard birds singing in their branches, and saw young storks fishing in the little pools that the rains of winter had left. But there was not one gardener there to tend the ground once so highly cultivated, and I was assured that the terror of the wazeer's name kept even the hungry beggars from the fruit in harvest time.

The home and its appointments duly exhibited, Sidi Boubikir led the way to a diwan in a well-cushioned room that opened on to the garden. He clapped his hands and a small regiment of women-servants, black and for the most part uncomely, arrived to prepare dinner. One brought a ewer, another a basin, a third a towel, and water was poured out over our hands. Then a large earthenware bowl encased in strong basketwork was brought by a fourth servant, and a tray of flat loaves of fine wheat by a fifth, and we broke bread and said the "Bismillah,"[1] which stands for grace. The bowl was uncovered and revealed a savoury stew of chicken with sweet lemon and olives, a very pleasing sight to all who appreciate Eastern cooking. The use of knives being a crime against the Faith, and the use of forks and spoons unknown, we plunged the fingers of the right hand into the bowl and sought what pleased us best, using the bread from time to time to deal with

[1] Literally, "In the name of God."

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STREET IN MARRAKESH

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the sauce of the stew. It was really a delicious dish, and when later in the afternoon I asked my host for the recipe he said he would give it to me if I would fill the bowl with Bank of England notes. I had to explain that, in my ignorance of the full resources of Moorish cooking, I had not come out with sufficient money.

So soon as the charm of the first bowl palled, it was taken away and others followed in quick succession, various meats and eggs being served with olives and spices and the delicate vegetables that come to Southern Morocco in early spring. It was a relief to come to the end of our duties and, our hands washed once more, to digest the meal with the aid of green tea flavoured with mint. Strong drink being forbidden to the True Believer, water only was served with the dinner, and as it was brought direct from the Tensift River, and was of rich red colour, there was no temptation to touch it. Sidi Boubikir was in excellent spirits, and told many stories of his earlier days, of his dealings with Bashadors, his quarrel with the great kaid Ben Daoud, the siege of the city by certain Illegitimate men—enemies of Allah and the Sultan—his journey to Gibraltar, and how he met one of the Rothschilds there and tried to do business with him. He spoke of his investments in consols and the poor return they brought him, and many other matters of equal moment.

It was not easy to realise that the man who spoke so brightly and lightly about trivial affairs had one of the keenest intellects in the country, that he had the secret history of its political intrigues at his fingers' ends, that

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he was the trusted agent of the British Government, and lived and throve surrounded by enemies. As far as was consistent with courtesy I tried to direct his reminiscences towards politics, but he kept to purely personal matters, and included in them a story of his attempt to bribe a British Minister,[1] to whom, upon the occasion of the arrival of a British Mission in Marrakesh, he went leading two mules laden with silver. "And when I came to him," said the old man, "I said, 'By Allah's grace I am rich, so I have brought you some share of my wealth.' But he would not even count the bags. He called with a loud voice for his wife, and cried to her, 'See now what this son of shame would do to me. He would give me his miserable money.' And then in very great anger he drove me from his presence and bade me never come near him again bearing a gift. What shall be said of a man like that, to whom Allah had given the wisdom to become a Bashador and the foolishness to reject a present? Two mules, remember, and each one with as many bags of Spanish dollars as it could carry. Truly the ways of your Bashadors are past belief." I agreed heartily with Sidi Boubikir; a day's discourse had not made clear any other aspect of the case.

[1] The late Sir William Kirby Green.

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THROUGH A SOUTHERN PROVINCE

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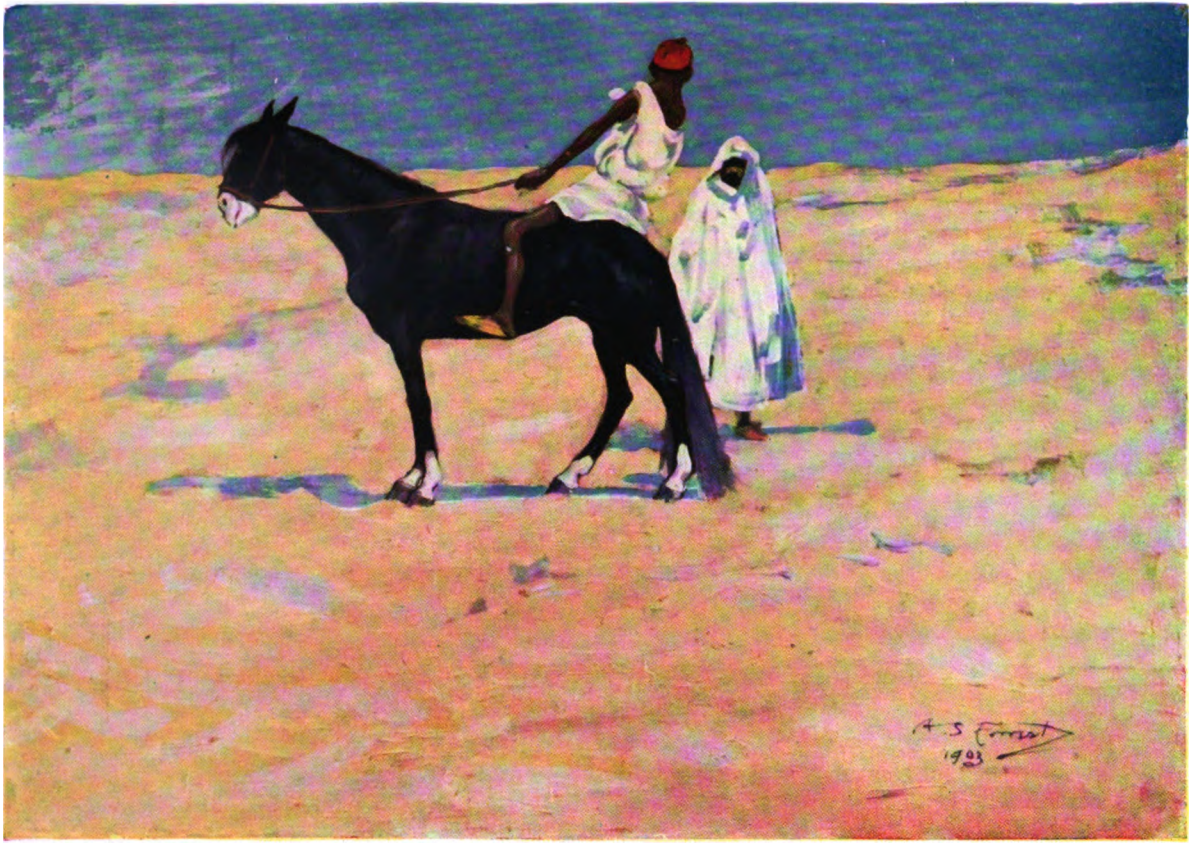

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CHAPTER IX

THROUGH A SOUTHERN PROVINCE

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot;
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower, and flower to fruit.

Atalanta in Calydon.

EVEN in these fugitive records of my last journey into the "Extreme West," I find it hard to turn from Marrakesh. Just as the city held me within its gates until further sojourn was impossible, so its memories crowd upon me now, and I recall with an interest I may scarcely hope to communicate the varied and compelling appeals it made to me at every hour of the day. Yet I believe, at least I hope, that most of the men and women who strive to gather for themselves some picture of the world's unfamiliar aspects will understand the fascination to which I refer, despite my failure to give it fitting expression. Sevilla in Andalusia held me in the same way when I went from Cadiz to spend a week-end there, and the three days became as many weeks, and would have become as many months or years had I been my own master—which to be sure we none

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of us are. The hand of the Moor is clearly to be seen in Sevilla to-day, notably in the Alcazar and the Giralda tower, fashioned by the builder of the Kutubia that stands like a stately lighthouse in the Blad al Hamra.

So, with the fascination of the city for excuse, I lingered in Marrakesh and went daily to the bazaars to make small purchases. The dealers were patient, friendly folk, and found no trouble too much, so that there was prospect of a sale at the end of it. Most of them had a collapsible set of values for their wares, but the dealer who had the best share of my Moorish or Spanish dollars was an old man in the bazaar of the brass-workers, who used to say proudly, "Behold in me thy servant, Abd el Kerim,[1] the man of one price."

The brass and copper workers had most of their metal brought to them from the Sus country, and sold their goods by weight. Woe to the dealer discovered with false scales. The gunsmiths, who seemed to do quite a big trade in flint-lock guns, worked with their feet as well as their hands, their dexterity being almost Japanese. Nearly every master had an apprentice or two, and if there are idle apprentices in the southern capital of my Lord Abd-el-Aziz, I was not fated to see one.

No phase of the city's life lacked fascination, nor was the interest abated when life and death moved side by side. A Moorish funeral wound slowly along the road in the path of a morning's ride. First came a crowd of

[1] Literally, "Slave of the Merciful."

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ragged fellows on foot singing the praises of Allah, who gives one life to his servants here and an eternity of bliss in Paradise at the end of their day's work. The body of the deceased followed, wrapped in a knotted shroud and partially covered with what looked like a coloured shawl, but was, I think, the flag from a saint's shrine. Four bearers carried the open bier, and following came men of high class on mules. The contrast between the living and the dead was accentuated by the freshness of the day, the life that thronged the streets, the absence of a coffin, the weird, sonorous chaunting of the mourners. The deceased must have been a man of mark, for the crowd preceding the bier was composed largely of beggars, on their way to the cemetery, where a gift of food would be distributed. Following their master's remains came two slaves, newly manumitted, their certificates of freedom borne aloft in cleft sticks to testify before all men to the generosity of the loudly lamented. Doubtless the shroud of the dead had been sprinkled with water brought from the well Zem Zem, which is by the mosque of Mecca, and is said to have been miraculously provided for Hagar, when Ishmael, then a little boy, was like to die of thirst in the wilderness.

I watched the procession wind its way out of sight to the burial-ground by the mosque, whose mueddin would greet its arrival with the cry, "May Allah have mercy upon him." Then the dead man would be carried to the cemetery, laid on his right side looking towards Mecca, and the shroud would be untied, that there may be no awkwardness or delay upon the

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day of the Resurrection. And the Kadi or f'K'hay[1] would say, "O Allah, if he did good, over-estimate his goodness; and if he did evil, forget his evil deeds; and of Thy Mercy grant that he may experience Thine Acceptance; and spare him the trials and troubles of the grave. . . . Of Thy Mercy grant him freedom from torment until Thou send him to Paradise, O Thou Most Pitiful of the pitying. . . . Pardon us, and him, and all Moslems, O Lord of Creation."

On the three following mornings the men of the deceased's house would attend by the newly-made grave, in company with the tolba, and would distribute bread and fruit to the poor, and when their task was over and the way clear, the veiled women would bring flowers, with myrtle, willows, and young leaves of the palm, and lay them on the grave, and over these the water-carrier would empty his goat-skin. I knew that the dead man would have gone without flinching to his appointed end, not as one who fears, but rather as he who sets out joyfully to a feast prepared in his honour. His faith had kept all doubts at bay, and even if he had been an ill liver the charitable deeds wrought in his name by surviving relatives would enable him to face the two angels who descend to the grave on the night following a man's burial and sit in judgment upon his soul. This one who passed me on his last journey would tell the angels of the men who were slaves but yesterday and were now free, he would speak of the hungry who had been fed, and of the intercession of the righteous and

[1] Priest attached to the Mosque.

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A YOUNG MARRAKSHI

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A YOUNG MARRAKSHI

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learned. These facts and his faith, the greatest fact of all, would assuredly satisfy Munkir and Nakir.[1] Small wonder if no manner of life, however vile, stamps ill-livers in Morocco with the seal we learn to recognise in the Western world. For the Moslem death has no sting, and hell no victory. Faith, whether it be in One God, in a Trinity, in Christ, Mohammed, or Buddha, is surely the most precious of all possessions, so it be as virile and living a thing as it is in Sunset Land.

Writing of religion, I needs must set down a word in this place of the men and women who work for the Southern Morocco Mission in Marrakesh. The beauty of the city has long ceased to hold any fresh surprises for them, their labour is among the people who "walk in noonday as in the night." It is not necessary to be of their faith to admire the steadfast devotion to high ideals that keeps Mr. Nairn and his companions in Marrakesh. I do not think that they make converts in the sense that they desire, the faith of Islam suits Morocco and the Moors, and it will not suffer successful invasion, but the work of the Mission has been effective in many ways. If the few Europeans who visit the city are free to wander unchallenged, unmolested through its every street, let them thank the missionaries; if the news that men from the West are straight-dealing, honourable, and slaves to truth, has gone from the villages on the hither side of Atlas down to the far cities of the Sus, let the missionaries be praised. And if a European woman can go unveiled yet

[1] The Angels of Judgment.

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uninsulted through Marrakesh, the credit is due to the ladies of the Mission. It may be said without mental reservation that the Southern Morocco Mission accomplishes a great work, and is most successful in its apparent failure. It does not make professing Christians out of Moors, but it teaches the Moors to live finer lives within the limits of their own faith, and if they are kinder and cleaner and more honourable by reason of their intercourse with the "tabibs" and "tabibas," the world gains and Morocco is well served. When the Sultan was in difficulties towards the end of 1902, and the star of Bu Hamara was in the ascendant, Sir Arthur Nicolson, our Minister in Tangier, ordered all British subjects to leave the inland towns for the coast. As soon as the news reached the Marrakshis, the houses of the missionaries were besieged by eager crowds of Moors and Berbers, offering to defend the well-beloved tabibs against all comers, and begging them not to go away. Very reluctantly Mr. Nairn and his companions obeyed the orders sent from Tangier, but, having seen their wives and children safely housed in Djedida, they returned to their work.

The Elhara or leper quarter is just outside one of the city gates, and after some effort of will, I conquered my repugnance and rode within its gate. The place proved to be a collection of poverty-stricken hovels built in a circle, of the native tapia, which was crumbling to pieces through age and neglect. Most of the inhabitants were begging in the city, where they are at liberty to remain until the gates are closed, but there were a

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FRUIT MARKET, MARRAKESH

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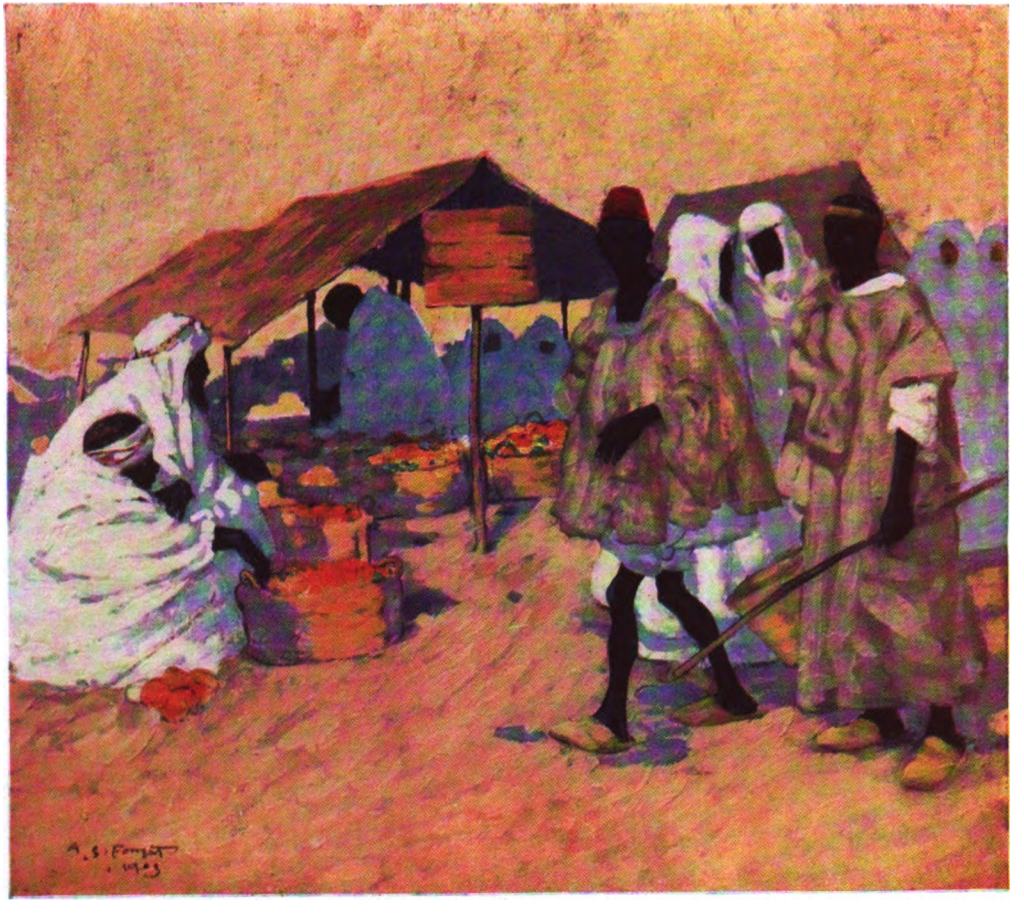

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few left at home, and I had some difficulty in restraining the keeper of Elhara, who wished to parade the unfortunate creatures before me that I might not miss any detail of their sufferings. Leper women peeped out from corners, as Boubikir's "house" had done; little leper children played merrily enough on the dry sandy ground, a few donkeys, covered with scars and half starved, stood in the scanty shade. In a deep cleft below the outer wall women and girls, very scantily clad, were washing clothes in a pool that is reserved apparently for the use of the stricken village. I was glad to leave the place behind me, after giving the unctuous keeper a gift for the sufferers that doubtless never reached them. They tell me that no sustained attempt is made to deal medically with the disease, though many nasty concoctions are taken by a few True Believers, whose faith, I fear, has not made them whole.[1]

When it became necessary for us to leave Marrakesh the young shareef went to the city's fandaks and inquired if they held muleteers bound for Mogador. The Maalem had taken his team home along the northern road, our path lay to the south, through the province of the Son of Lions (Oulad bou Sba), and thence through Shiadma and Haha to the coast. We were fortunate in finding the men we sought without any delay. A certain kaid of the Sus country, none other than El Arbi bel Hadj ben Haida, who rules

[1] So many lepers come from the Argan Forest provinces of Haha and Shiadma that leprosy is believed by many Moors to result from the free use of Argan oil. There is no proper foundation for this belief.

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over Tiensiert, had sent six muleteers to Marrakesh to sell his oil, in what is the best southern market, and he had worked out their expenses on a scale that could hardly be expected to satisfy anybody but himself.

"From Tiensiert to Marrakesh is three days journey," he had said, and, though it is five, no man contradicted him, perhaps because five is regarded as an unfortunate number, not to be mentioned in polite or religious society. "Three days will serve to sell the oil and rest the mules," he had continued, "and three days more will bring you home." Then he gave each man three dollars for travelling money, about nine shillings English, and out of it the mules were to be fed, the charges of n'zala and fandak to be met, and if there was anything over the men might buy food for themselves. They dared not protest, for El Arbi bel Hadj ben Haida had every man's house in his keeping, and if the muleteers had failed him he would have had compensation in a manner no father of a family would care to think about. The oil was sold, and the muleteers were preparing to return to their master, when Salam offered them a price considerably in excess of what they had received for the whole journey to take us to Mogador. Needless to say they were not disposed to let the chance go by, for it would not take them two days out of their way, so I went to the fandak to see mules and men, and complete the bargain. There had been a heavy shower some days before, and the streets were more than usually miry, but in the fandak,

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IN THE FANDAK

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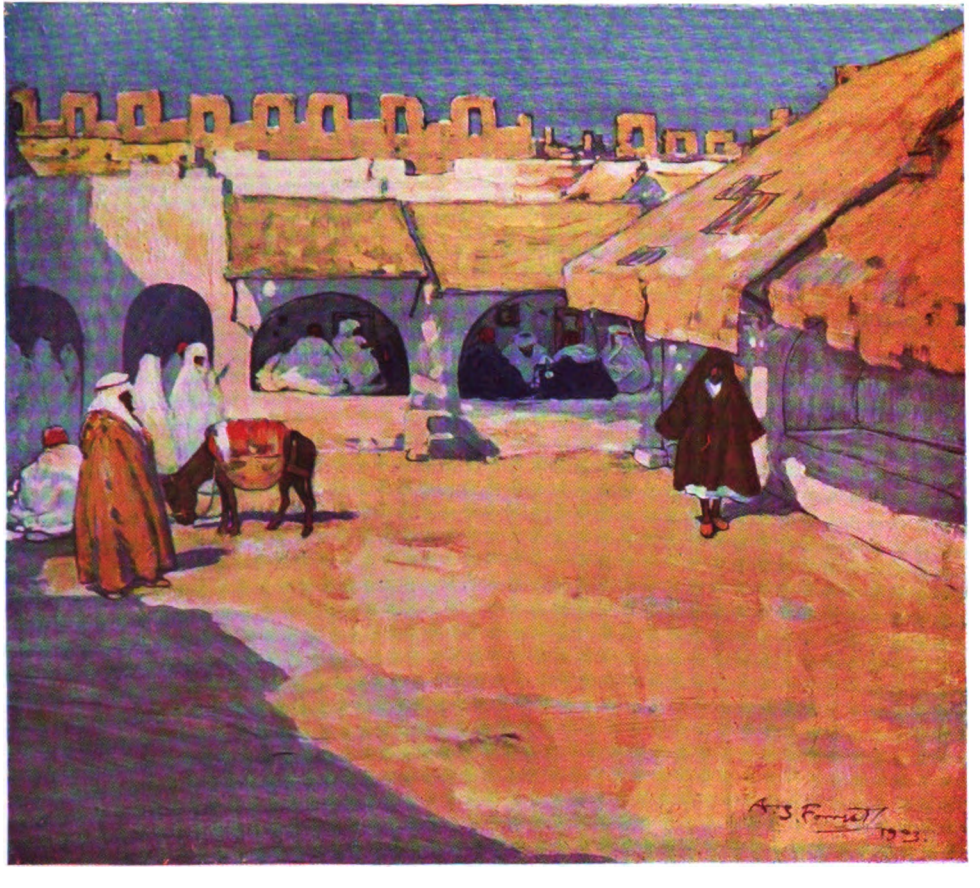

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whose owner had no marked taste for cleanliness, the accumulated dirt of all the rainy season had been stirred, with results I have no wish to record. A few donkeys in the last stages of starvation had been sent in to gather strength by resting, one at least was too far gone to eat. Even the mules of the Susi tribesmen were not in a very promising condition. It was an easy task to count their ribs, and they were badly in need of rest and a few square meals. Tied in the covered cloisters of the fandak there was some respite for them from the attack of mosquitoes, but the donkeys, being cheap and of no importance, were left to all the torments that were bound to be associated with the place.

Only one human being faced the glare of the light and trod fearlessly through the mire that lay eight or ten inches deep on the ground, and he was a madman, well-nigh as tattered and torn as the one I had angered in the Kaisariyah on the morning after my arrival in the city. This man's madness took a milder turn. He went from one donkey to another, whispering in its ear, a message of consolation I hope and believe, though I had no means of finding out. When I entered the fandak he came running up to me in a style suggestive of the gambols of a playful dog, and I was exceedingly annoyed by a thought that he might not know any difference between me and his other friends. There was no need to be uneasy, for he drew himself up to his full height, made a hissing noise in his throat, and spat fiercely at my shadow. Then he returned to the stricken donkeys, and the

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keeper of the fandak, coming out to welcome me, saw his more worthy visitor. Turning from me with "Marhababik" ("You are welcome") just off his lips, he ran forward and kissed the hem of the madman's djellaba.

A madman is very often an object of veneration in Morocco, for his brain is in divine keeping, while his body is on the earth. And yet the Moor is not altogether logical in his attitude to the "afflicted of Allah." While so much liberty is granted to the majority of the insane that feigned madness is quite common among criminals in the country, less fortunate men who have really become mentally afflicted, but are not recognised as insane, are kept chained to the walls of the Marstan—half hospital, half prison—that is attached to the most great mosques. I have been assured that they suffer considerably at the hands of most gaoler-doctors, whose medicine is almost invariably the stick, but I have not been able to verify the story, which is quite opposed to Moorish tradition. The mad visitor to the fandak did not disturb the conversation with the keeper and the Susi muleteers, but he turned the head of a donkey in our direction and talked eagerly to the poor animal, pointing at me with outstretched finger the while. The keeper of the fandak, kind man, made uneasy by this demonstration, signed to me quietly to stretch out my hand, with palm open, and directed to the spot where the madman stood, for only in that way could I hope to avert the evil eye.

The chief muleteer was a thin and wiry little fellow,

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a total stranger to the soap and water beloved of Unbelievers. He could not have been more than five feet high, and he was burnt brown. His dark outer garment of coarse native wool had the curious yellow patch on the back that all Berbers seem to favour, though none can explain its origin or purpose, and he carried his slippers in his hand, probably deeming them less capable of withstanding hard wear than his naked feet. He had no Arabic, but spoke only "Shilha," the language of the Berbers, so it took some time to make all arrangements, including the stipulation that a proper meal for all the mules was to be given under the superintendence of M'Barak. That worthy representative of Shareefian authority was having a regal time, drawing a dollar a day, together with three meals and a ration for his horse, in return for sitting at ease in the courtyard of the Tin House.

Arrangements concluded, it was time to say good-bye to Sidi Boubikir. I asked delicately to be allowed to pay rent for the use of the house, but the hospitable old man would not hear of it. "Allah forbid that I should take any money," he remarked piously. "Had you told me you were going I would have asked you to dine with me again before you started." We sat in the well-remembered room, where green tea and mint were served in a beautiful set of china-and-gold filagree cups, presented to him by the British Government nearly ten years ago. He spoke at length of the places that should be visited, including the house of his near relative, Mulai el Hadj of

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Tamsloht, to whom he offered to send me with letters and an escort. Moreover, he offered an escort to see us out of the city and on the road to the coast, but I judged it better to decline both offers, and, with many high-flown compliments, left him by the entrance to his great house, and groped back through the mud to put the finishing touches to packing.

The young shareef accepted a parting gift with grave dignity, and assured me of his esteem for all time and his willing service when and where I should need it. I had said good-bye to the "tabibs" and "tabibas," so nothing remained but to rearrange our goods, that nearly everything should be ready for the mules when they arrived before daybreak. Knowing that the first day's ride was a long one, some forty miles over an indifferent road and with second-rate animals, I was anxious to leave the city as soon as the gates were opened.

Right above my head the mueddin in the minaret overlooking the Tin House called the sleeping city to its earliest prayer.[1] I rose and waked the others, and we dressed by a candle-light that soon became superfluous. When the mueddin began the chant that sounded so impressive and so mournful as it was echoed from every minaret in the city, the first approach of light would have been visible in the east, and in these latitudes day comes and goes upon winged feet. Before

[1] This is the most important of the five supplications. The Sura of Al Koran called "The Night Journey" says, "To the prayer of daybreak the Angels themselves bear witness."

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THE JAMA'A EFFINA

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the beds were taken to pieces and Salam had the porridge and his "marmalade" ready, with steaming coffee, for early breakfast, we heard the mules clattering down the stony street. Within half an hour the packing comedy had commenced. The Susi muleteer, who was accompanied by a boy and four men, one a slave, and all quite as frowzy, unwashed, and picturesque as himself, swore that we did not need four pack-mules but eight. Salam, his eyes flaming, and each separate hair of his beard standing on end, cursed the shameless women who gave such men as the Susi muleteer and his fellows to the kingdom of my Lord Abd-el-Aziz, threw the *shwarris* on the ground, rejected the ropes, and declared that with proper fittings the mules, if these were mules at all, and he had his very serious doubts about the matter, could run to Mogador in three days. Clearly Salam intended to be master from the start, and when I came to know something more about our company, the wisdom of the procedure was plain. Happily for one and all Mr. Nairn came along at this moment. It was not five o'clock, but the hope of serving us had brought him into the cold morning air, and his thorough knowledge of the Shilha tongue worked wonders. He was able to send for proper ropes at an hour when we could have found no trader to supply them, and if we reached the city gate that looks out towards the south almost as soon as the camel caravan that had waited without all night, the accomplishment was due to my kind friend who, with Mr. Alan Lennox, had done so much to make the stay in Marrakesh happily memorable.

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It was just half-past six when the last pack-mule passed the gate, whose keeper said graciously, "Allah prosper the journey," and, though the sun was up, the morning was cool, with a delightfully fresh breeze from the west, where the Atlas Mountains stretched beyond range of sight in all their unexplored grandeur. They seemed very close to us in that clear atmosphere, but their foot hills lay a day's ride away, and the natives would be prompt to resent the visit of a stranger who did not come to them with the authority of a kaid or governor whose power and will to punish promptly were indisputable. With no little regret I turned, when we had been half an hour on the road, for a last look at Ibn Tachfin's city. Distance had already given it the indefinite attraction that comes when the traveller sees some city of old time in a light that suggests every charm and defines none. I realised that I had never entered an Eastern city with greater pleasure, or left one with more sincere regret, and that if time and circumstance had been my servants I would not have been so soon upon the road.

The road from Marrakesh to Mogador is as pleasant as traveller could wish, lying for a great part of the way through fertile land, but it is seldom followed, because of the two unbridged rivers N'fiss and Sheshoua. If either is in flood (and both are fed by the melting snows from the Atlas Mountains), you must camp on the banks for days together, until it shall please Allah to abate the waters. Our lucky star was in the ascendant; we reached Wad N'fiss at eleven o'clock to find its

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waters low and clear. On the far side of the banks we stayed to lunch by the border of a thick belt of sedge and bulrushes, a marshy place stretching over two or three acres, and glowing with the rich colour that comes to southern lands in April and in May. It recalled to me the passage in one of the stately choruses of Mr. Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, that tells how "blossom by blossom the spring begins."

The intoxication that lies in colour and sound has ever had more fascination for me than the finest wine could bring: the colour of the vintage is more pleasing than the taste of the grape. In this forgotten corner the eye and ear were assailed and must needs surrender. Many tiny birds of the warbler family sang among the reeds, where I set up what I took to be a Numidian crane, and, just beyond the river growths, some splendid oleanders gave an effective splash of scarlet to the surrounding greens and greys. In the waters of the marsh the bullfrogs kept up a loud sustained croak, as though they were True Believers disturbed by the presence of the Infidels. The N'fiss is a fascinating river from every point of view. Though comparatively small, few Europeans have reached the source, and it passes through parts of the country where a white man's presence would be resented effectively. The spurs of the Atlas were still clearly visible on our left hand, and needless to say we had the place to ourselves. There was not so much as a tent in sight.

At last M'Barak, who had resumed his place at the head of our little company, and now realised that

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we had prolonged our stay beyond proper limits, mounted his horse rather ostentatiously, and the journey was resumed over level land that was very scantily covered with grass or clumps of irises. The mountains seemed to recede and the plain to spread out; neither eye nor glass revealed a village; we were apparently riding towards the edge of the plains. The muleteer and his companions strode along at a round pace, supporting themselves with sticks and singing melancholy Shilha love-songs. Their mules, recollection of their good meal of the previous evening being forgotten, dropped to a pace of something less than four miles an hour, and as the gait of our company had to be regulated by the speed of its slowest member, it is not surprising that night caught us up on the open and shut out a view of the billowy plain that seemingly held no resting-place. How I missed the little Maalem, whose tongue would have been a spur to the stumbling beasts! But as wishing would bring nothing, we dismounted and walked by the side of our animals, the kaid alone remaining in the saddle. Six o'clock became seven, and seven became eight, and then I found it sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark. Of course it was not a "deep-mouthed welcome:" it was no more than a cry of warning and defiance raised by the colony of pariah dogs that guarded Ain el Baidah, our destination.

In the darkness, that had a pleasing touch of purple colouring lent it by the stars, Ain el Baidah's headman loomed very large and imposing. "Praise to Allah that you have come and in health," he remarked, as

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though we were old friends. He assured me of my welcome, and said his village had a guest-house that would serve instead of the tent. Methought he protested too much, but knowing that men and mules were dead beat, and that we had a long way to go, I told Salam that the guest-house would serve, and the headman lead the way to a tapia building that would be called a very small barn, or a large fowl-house, in England. A tiny clay lamp, in which a cotton wick consumed some mutton fat, revealed a corner of the darkness and the dirt, and when our own lamps banished the one, they left the other very clearly to be seen. But we were too tired to utter a complaint. I saw the mules brought within the zariba, helped to set up my camp bed, took the cartridges out of my shot gun, and, telling Salam to say when supper was ready, fell asleep at once. Eighteen busy hours had passed since the mueddin called to "feyer" from the minaret above the Tin House, but my long-sought rest was destined to be brief.

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"SONS OF LIONS" AND OTHER TRUE BELIEVERS

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EVENING IN CAMP

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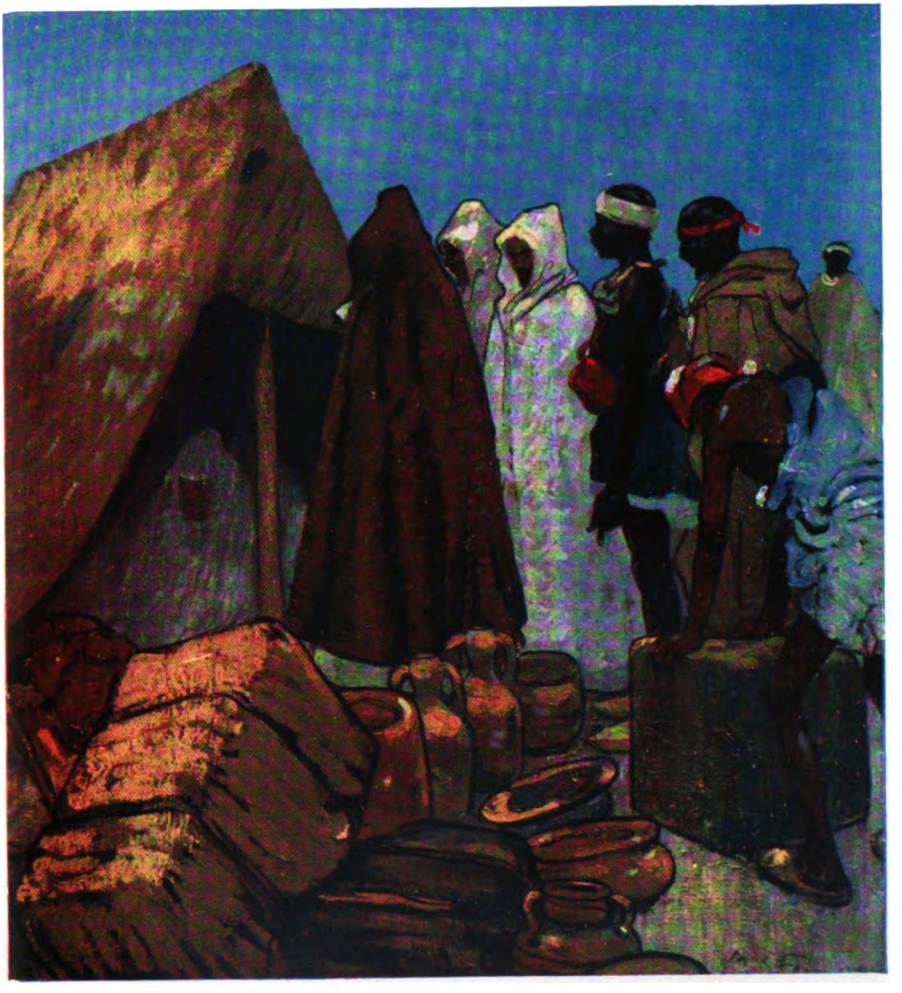

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CHAPTER X

"SONS OF LIONS" AND OTHER TRUE BELIEVERS

FALSTAFF—"Four rogues in buckram let drive at me."
King Henry IV., Act II. Scene 4.

By the time Salam had roused me from a dream in which I was being torn limb from limb in a Roman amphitheatre, whose terraced seats held countless Moors all hugely enjoying my dismemberment, I realised that a night in that guest-house would be impossible. The place was already over-populated.

A brief meal was taken in the open, and we sat with our feet thrust to the edge of the nearest charcoal fire, for the night was cold. Our animals, tethered and watered, stood anxiously waiting for the barley the chief muleteer had gone to buy. Supper over, I sat on a chair in the open, and disposed myself for sleep as well as the conditions permitted. Round me, on the bare ground, the men and the boy from the Sus lay wrapped in their haiks—the dead could not have slept more soundly than they. The two fires were glimmering very faintly now, M'Barak was stretching a blanket for himself, while Salam collected the tin plates and dishes, his last task before retiring. Somewhere in the far outer dark-

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ness I heard the wail of a hyæna, and a light cold breeze sighed over the plain. Half asleep and half awake I saw the village headman approaching from out the darkness; a big bag of barley was on his shoulder, and he was followed closely by the muleteer. They came into the little circle of the fast falling light; I was nodding drowsily toward unconsciousness, and wondering, with a vague resentment that exhausted all my remaining capacity to think, why the headman should be speaking so loudly. Suddenly, I saw the muleteer go to earth as if he had been pole-axed, and in that instant I was wide awake and on my feet. So was Salam.

The headman delivered himself of a few incisive rasping sentences. The muleteer rose slowly and wiped a little blood from his face.

Salam explained: his capacity for fathoming a crisis was ever remarkable. "Headman he charge three dollars for barley and he don't worth more than one. Muleteer he speaks for that, and headman 'e knock him down."

"Ask him how he dares interfere with our people," I said. "Tell him his kaid shall hear of it."

The headman replied haughtily to Salam's questions and strode away. "He say," said Salam, beginning to get angry, "Pay first and talk afterwards—to Allah, if you will. He say he wait long time for man like muleteer an' cut 'im throat. What he's bin done that be nothing. What he's goin' to do, that all Moors is goin' to see. He come back soon, sir."

Then Salam slipped noiselessly into the guest-house

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and fetched my repeating shot gun, from which I had previously drawn all cartridges. He sat down outside with the weapon across his knees, and the bruised muleteer safely behind him. I coaxed the charcoal to a further effort and returned to my chair, wondering whether trouble that had been so long in coming had arrived at last. Some five minutes later we heard a sound of approaching footsteps, and I could not help noting how Salam brightened. He was spoiling for a fight. I watched dim figures coming into the area of light, they took shape and showed Ain al Baidah's chief and two of his men—tall, sturdy fellows, armed with thick sticks. Seeing Salam sitting with gun levelled full on them they came to a sudden halt, and listened while he told them, in a voice that shook and sometimes broke with rage, their character, their characteristics, the moral standing of their parents and grandparents, the probable fate of their sons, and the certain and shameful destiny of their daughters. He invited them, with finger on trigger, to advance one step and meet the death that should enable him to give their ill-favoured bodies one by one to the pariahs and the hawks, before he proceeded to sack Ain al Baidah and overcome single-handed the whole of its fighting men. And, absurd though his rodomontade may sound to Europeans, who read it in cold print, it was a vastly different matter there in the dark of the Plain, when Salam stood, believing he held a loaded gun in his hand, and allowed his fierce temper rein. The headman and his two attendants slunk off like whipped curs, and

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we proceeded to feed our animals, replenish both fires, and sleep with one eye open.

Morning came over the hills to Ain al Baidah in cold and cheerless guise. The villagers crowded round to stare at us in the familiar fashion. But there were grim looks and dark scowls among them, and, failing the truculent and determined bearing of Salam and the presence of the kaid we should have had a lively quarter of an hour. As it was, we were not ready to leave before eight o'clock, and then Salam went, money in hand, to where the thieving headman stood. The broken night's rest had not made my companion more pleased with Ain al Baidah's chief. He threw the dollars that had been demanded on to the ground before the rogue's feet, and then his left hand flew up and outward. With one swift, irresistible movement he had caught his foe by the beard, drawn down the shrinking, vicious face to within a few inches of his own, and so holding him, spoke earnestly for half a minute, of what the Prophet has said about hospitality to travellers, and the shocking fate that awaits headmen who rob those who come seeking shelter, and beat them when they complain. Ain al Baidah's chief could not but listen, and listening, he could not but shudder. So it fell out that, when Salam's harangue was finished, we left a speechless, irresolute, disgraced headman, and rode away slowly, that none might say we knew fear. If the village had any inclination to assist its chief, the sight of the blessed one's weapon, in its fierce red cloth covering, must have awed them. Some days later,

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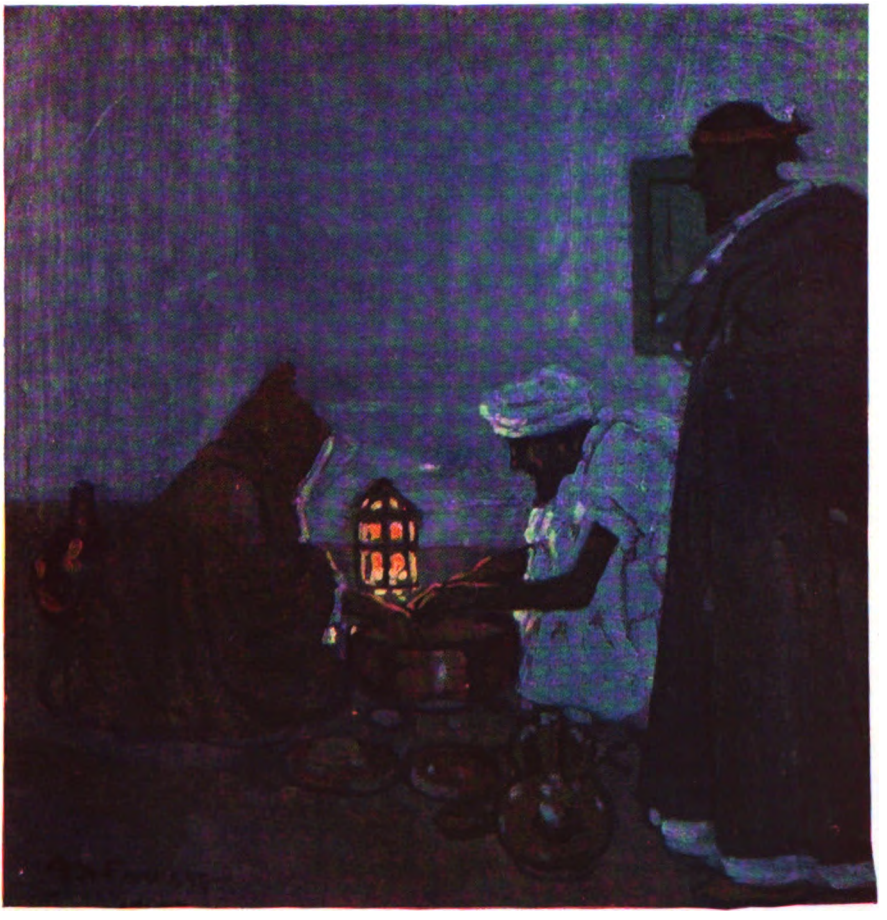

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in Mogador, I was told that the Ain al Baidah man is a terror to travellers and a notorious robber, but I made no complaint to our Consul. If the headman's overlord had been told to punish him, the method chosen would assuredly have been to rob every man in the douar, and if they resisted, burn their huts over their heads. It seemed better to trust that the memory of Salam will lead Ain al Baidah's chief to lessen his proud looks.

We made slow progress to Sheshoua, where the river that might have barred our road to the coast was as friendly as the N'fiss had been on the previous day. The track to its banks had been flat and uninteresting enough; what good work the winter rains had done by way of weaving a flower carpet on the plains, the summer sun had destroyed. There was a considerable depression in the plain, though we could not notice it at the slow pace forced upon us, and this accounted for the absence of water between the rivers, and for the great extent of the calcareous gravel, in which few plants could thrive. Only the *zizyphus lotus*, from whose branches little white snails hung like flowers, seemed to find real nourishment in the dry ground, though colocynth and wild lavender were to be seen now and again. But by the Sheshoua River the change was very sudden and grateful to the eye.

A considerable olive grove, whose grey-green leaves shone like silver in the light breeze, offered shade and shelter to a large colony of doves. There was a thriving village, with a saint's tomb for chief attraction, and solid walls to suggest that the place does not

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enjoy perennial tranquillity. But even though there are strangers who trouble these good folk, their home could not have looked more charmingly a haunt of peace than it did. All round the village one saw orchards of figs, apricots, and pomegranate trees; the first with the leaves untouched by the summer heat, the apricots just at the end of their blossoming, and the pomegranates still in flower. In place of the dry, hard soil that was so trying to the feet of man and beast, there were here meadows in plenty, from which the irises had only lately died. I saw the common English dandelion growing within stone's throw of a clump of feathery palms.

Tired after the vigil of the previous night and the long hours that had led up to it, we reclined at our ease under the olives, determined to spend the night at Sidi el Muktar, some fifteen or twenty miles away. From there one can hunt the great bustard, and I had hoped to do so until I saw the animals that were to take us to the coast. Neither the bustard nor the gazelle, that sometimes roams Sidi el Muktar's plains, had anything to fear from those noble creatures. The kaid alone might have pursued bird or beast, but as his gun was innocent of powder and shot there would have been nothing but exercise to seek.

After a two-hours' rest, given in one case more to sleep than lunch, we moved on towards the village of Sidi el Muktar, passing some curious flat-topped hills called by the natives Haunk Ijjimmal.[1] The

[1] The Camel's Jaw.

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oasis had ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and the road became as uninteresting as was our own crawling gait. I noticed that the Susi muleteers were travelling very sadly, that they had not among them an echo of the songs that had sounded so strangely on the previous day, and I bade Salam find the cause of the depression, and ask whether the young lad whose features had become pinched and drawn felt ill. Within a few moments the truth was out. The six men had eaten nothing save a little of the mules' barley since they left Marrakesh, and as they had been on short rations between Tiensiert and the Southern capital, their strength was beginning to give out. It was no part of my business to feed them; they had received "something in the hand" before they left the city, and could well have bought supplies for the road, but they had preferred to trust Providence, and hoped to live on a small part of the mules' barley and the daily gift of tea that had been promised. Under the circumstances, and though I had found reason to believe that they were lazy, feckless rogues enough, who really needed an iron-handed kaid to rule over them, I told Salam to pass word round that their wants would be supplied at the day's end. Then they picked up their old stride, and one by one resumed the love-songs of yesterday as we moved slowly over the plains to where, in the far distance, Sidi el Muktar stood between us and the fast setting sun, placed near to the junction of three provinces—Oulad bou Sba, through which we travelled, M'touga, famous for fleet horses, and Shiadma, where our road lay.

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But we were to find no rest in the shade of Sidi el Muktar's stately zowia. The "Sons of Lions" had raided the place on the previous day, hoping to terminate alike the rule and the existence of a kaid whose hand had rested too heavily upon them. Some friend of the kaid having given him due notice of the raiders' intentions—treachery is a painfully common feature of these forays—he had been well prepared to meet these godless men. Powder had spoken, and was to speak again, for the kaid, having driven off the raiders, was going to carry war into the enemy's country, and was busy preparing to start on the morrow at daybreak. At such a time as this it had not been wise to pitch tent within sound or sight of men with the killing lust upon them. Very reluctantly we rode on for another two hours and then Ain Umast, a douar that is famous for its possession of a well of pure water, received us with nightfall. There our troubles were over, for though the place was more than commonly dirty, the inhabitants were peaceable and disposed to be friendly. A few crops were raised on the surrounding fields, and small herds of sheep and goats managed to pick up some sort of a living on the surrounding lands, but poverty reigned there, and Ain Umast is of small account by the side of Sidi el Muktar, which is the burial-place of a saint, whose miracles are still acknowledged by all the faithful who happen to have met with good luck of any sort.

Bread, butter, and eggs were brought for the

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muleteers, and I was greatly surprised by the cleanliness of the men. Before they broke an egg for the omelette they washed it with greatest care. They themselves stood far more in need of a washing than the eggs did, but perhaps they could not be expected to think of everything. Barley was bought, at half the price charged at Ain el Baidah, and I noticed that the cunning Susi hid some of it in the long bag they kept at the bottom of one of the *shwarris*. Clearly they intended to make the supply we paid for serve to take them all the way to Tiensiert. This was annoying, since one of the objects of ordering a good supply each night was to enable the long-suffering beasts to compass a better speed on the following day.

That evening there was great excitement in the douar. The elders came round our fire after supper and sought to know if it were true that the "Sons of Lions" had blotted out Sidi el Muktar, and put all its inhabitants to the sword. When we declared that the little town was still where it had stood since they were born, they appeared distinctly surprised, and gave the praise and credit to the patron saint. They said the kaid's hand was a very heavy one, that his men went to the Wednesday market and were the terror of the country folks who came to buy and sell. The absence of the Court Elevated by Allah was to be deplored, for had my Lord Abd-el-Aziz been in residence at Marrakesh some other kaid would have made him a bid for the place of the ruler of Sidi el Muktar, basing his offer upon the fact that the present governor could not

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keep order. A change might have been for the better—it could hardly have been for the worse. One or two of the men of Ain Umast spoke Shilha, and the Susi men, hearing the cruelties of Sidi el Muktar's ruler discussed, claimed to have a far better specimen of the genus kaid in Tiensiert. He was a man indeed, ready with fire and sword at the shortest notice; his subjects called him Father of Locusts, so thoroughly did he deal with all things that could be eaten up.

It was a curious but instructive attitude. These miserable men were quite proud to think that the tyranny of their kaid, the great El Arbi bel Hadj ben Haida, was not to be rivalled by anything Shiadma could show. They instanced his treatment of them and pointed to the young boy who was of their company. His father had been kaid in years past, but the late Grand Wazeer Ba Ahmad sold his office to El Arbi, who threw the man into prison and kept him there until he died. To show his might, El Arbi had sent the boy with them, that all men might know how the social scales of Tiensiert held the kaid on one side and the rest of the people on the other. The black slave who accompanied them had been brought up by the late kaid's father, and was devoted to the boy. In his mercy El Arbi allowed him to live with the lad and work a small farm, the harvest of which was strictly tithed by Tiensiert's chief—who took a full nine-tenths. Before the evening was over the elders of Ain Umast had acknowledged, rather regretfully I thought, that the tyrant of Sidi el Muktar must hide a diminished head before his brother

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of the Sus. The triumph of the grimy men from Tiensiert was then complete.

They were a sorry set of fellows enough, to outward seeming, but how shall a European judge them fairly? Stevenson says in one of his Essays, "Justice is not done to the versatility and the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination. His life from without may seem but a rude mound of mud; there will be some golden chamber at the heart of it, in which he dwells delighted; and for as dark as his pathway seems to the observer, he will have some kind of bull's-eye at his belt." So, doubtless, had I had the eyes that see below the surface, these hardy traders, the best of whose hopes and actions were hidden from me, would have been no less interesting than the Maalem or the young shareef.

In view of the disturbed state of the country I thought of having a few extra guards, but finding the two already engaged sleeping peacefully before our tent was closed, it seemed likely that a couple of sleeping men would be as useful as four. I fear they had a troubled night, for though the "Sons of Lions" did not trouble us, a short, sharp shower came with the small hours and woke the poor fellows, who asked for extra money in the morning by way of consolation for their broken rest. By five o'clock we were astir, and soon after we were on the road again, bound for the village of Hanchen, where a small Sok Thalata[1] is held. After a brief mid-day rest we reached the outskirts of the Argan Forest.

[1] "Tuesday market.

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This great forest is quite the distinctive feature of Southern Morocco. The argan tree, that gives a name to it, is the indigenous olive of the country, and is found only in the zone between the Tensift river and the river Sus. Argan wood is exceedingly hard and slow growing, thus differing materially from the olive, to which it seems so nearly related. The trunk divides low down, sometimes within six feet of the roots, and the branches grow horizontally. If the Moors are right, the age of the elders of the forest is to be counted in centuries, and the wood can defy the attacks of insects that make short-work of other trees. The leaves of the argan recall those of the olive, but have even a lighter silvery aspect on the underside; the fruit is like the olive, but considerably larger, and is sought after by many animals. Goats climb among the branches in search of the best nuts. Camels and cows will not pass an argan tree if given the slightest chance to linger. The animals that eat the nuts reject their kernels, and the Moors collect these in order to extract the oil, which is used in cooking, for lighting purposes, and as medicine. After extraction the pulp is eagerly accepted by cattle, so no part of the valued fruit is wasted. One of the giants of the forest, said to be four hundred years old, has before now given shade to a regiment of soldiers; I saw for myself that the circumference of its branches was more than two hundred feet.

But it must not be thought that the Argan Forest is composed entirely of these trees. The argan dominates

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COMING FROM THE MOSQUE, HANCHEN

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the forest but does not account for its beauty. The r'tam is almost as plentiful, and lends far more to the wood's colour scheme, for its light branches are stirred by every breeze. Dwarf-palm is to be found on all sides, together with the arar or citrus, and the double-thorned lotus. The juniper, wild pear, and cork trees are to be met with now and again, and the ground is for the most part a sea of flowers almost unknown to me, though I could recognise wild thyme, asphodel, and lavender amid the tamarisk and myrtle undergrowth. At intervals the forest opens, showing some large douar that was built probably on the site of a well, and there industrious village folks have reclaimed the land, raised crops, and planted orchards. Olive, fig, and pomegranate seem to be the most popular trees, and corn is grown in the orchards too, possibly in order that it may have the benefit of the trees' shade. The soil that can raise corn and fruit trees together must have exceptional vitality and richness, particularly in view of the fact that it is in no way fed, and is rather scraped or scratched than truly ploughed.

The village of Hanchen, known for miles round as "Sok Thalata" by reason of its weekly gathering, might well serve to justify a halt. It straggles over a hill surrounded on all sides by the forest, it has a saint's shrine of fair size and imposing aspect, a good supply of water, and very peaceful inhabitants. At the base of the slope, some fifty yards from the broad track leading to the coast, there was an orchard of more than common beauty, even for Southern Morocco. The pomegranates,

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aflower above the ripening corn, had finer blossoms than any I had seen before, the fig-trees were Biblical in their glossy splendour. Mules were footsore, the Susi men were tired, the weather was perfect, time was our own for a day or two, and I was aching to take my gun down the long glades that seemed to stretch to the horizon. So we off-saddled, and pitched our tent in the shadow of a patriarchal fig-tree. Then the mules were eased of their burdens and fed liberally, Salam standing between the poor beasts and the muleteers, who would have impounded a portion of their hard-earned meal.

The heat of the afternoon was passing; I loaded my gun and started out. At first sight of the weapon some score of lads from the village—athletic, vigorous boys, ready to go anywhere and do anything—made signs that they would come and beat for me. With Salam's help I gave them proper instructions; my idea was to shoot enough of fur and feather to give the muleteers a good supper.

At the outset a sorry accident befell. A fat pigeon came sailing overhead, so well fed that it was hard to believe he was a pigeon at all. This being the sort of bird that suits hungry men, I fired and was well pleased to note the swift direct fall, and to hear the thud that tells of a clean kill. To my surprise the beaters remained where they were, none offering to pick up the bird. There were glum and serious looks on every side. I motioned one lad to go forward, and, to my amazement, he made the sign that is intended to avert

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the evil eye, and declared that he took refuge from me with Allah.

I sent for Salam, and, as he approached, a chorus of explanations came to him from all sides. The pigeon came from the zowia of El Hanchen. It was sacred—that is why it was so fat. This was a bad beginning, and a matter that demanded careful handling. So I sent M'Barak, representing official Morocco, to express to El Hanchen's headman my extreme sorrow and sincere regret. The blessed one was instructed to assure the village that I had no suspicion of the bird's holiness, and that it was my rule in life to respect everything that other men respected. It seemed courteous to await the kaid's return before resuming operations, and he came back in half an hour with word that the headman, while deeply regretting the incident, recognised the absence of bad intention. He asked that the sacred slain might not be eaten. I sent back word thanking him for his courteous acceptance of my explanations, and promising that the fat pigeon should receive decent burial. A small hole was dug on the sunny side of the fig-tree, and there the sacred bird was interred. I hope that the worms proved as particular as we had been.

Duty done, we went off to the woods, the beaters, now quite reassured, driving stock-doves over in quantities that left no reason to fear about the muleteers' supper. While birds were the quarry the lads worked well, but now and again a hare would start from her form, and every boy would join in the headlong, hopeless chase that ensued. It was impossible to check them,

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and equally impossible to shoot at the hare. While she was within gunshot the lads were close on her heels, and by the time she had distanced them or dashed into the long grasses and scrub she was out of range or out of sight. In vain I waved them back and complained when they returned panting; as soon as another hare got up they went after her in the same way, until at last, taking advantage of a wild chase that had carried them rather a longer distance than usual, I took a sharp turn and strolled away quite by myself. I heard the excited cries die away in the distance, and then for some few moments the forest silence was broken only by the rustle of the breeze through the grass, and the sudden scream of a startled jay. Doves went happily from tree to tree and I never put my gun up. I had heard a very familiar sound, and wanted to be assured that my ears were not deceived. No, I was right; I could hear the cuckoo, calling through the depth of the forest, as though it were my favourite Essex copse at home. It was pleasant, indeed, to hear the homely notes so far from any other object, even remotely, connected with England.

I strolled for an hour or more, listening to the "wandering voice," heedless of what passed me by, at peace with all the world, and resolved to shoot no more. Alas, for good intentions! Coming suddenly into a great clearing girdled by argan trees, I flushed two large birds some forty yards away. The first was missed, the second came down and proved to be a Lesser Bustard or *boozerat*—quite a prize. Well content, I emptied the gun to avoid temptation and

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walked back to the camp, where there was quite a fair bag.

"Tell the muleteers, Salam," I said, "that they may have these birds for their supper, and that I hope they will enjoy themselves."

Salam wore a rather troubled expression, I thought, as he went to the head muleteer and pointed to the spoils. Then he came back and explained to me that their dietary laws did not allow the Susi to eat anything that had not been killed by bleeding in the orthodox fashion. Had they been with me, to turn wounded birds to the East and cut their throats in the name of Allah, all would have been well, but birds shot dead were an abomination to the righteous Susi. They scorned to avail themselves of the excuse afforded by their needs.[1] So my labour had been in vain, and I did not know what to do with the spoil. But I left the slain in a little heap out of the way of insects and flies, and when we rose in the morning the unorthodox among Hanchen's inhabitants had apparently solved the problem.

[1] "I find not in that which hath been revealed to me anything forbidden unto the eater . . . except it be that which dieth of itself . . . or that which is profane, having been slain in the name of some other than God. But whoso shall be compelled of necessity to eat these things, not lusting nor wilfully transgressing, verily thy Lord will be gracious unto him and merciful."—Al Koran, Sura, "Cattle."

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IN THE ARGAN FOREST

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EVENING AT HANCHEN

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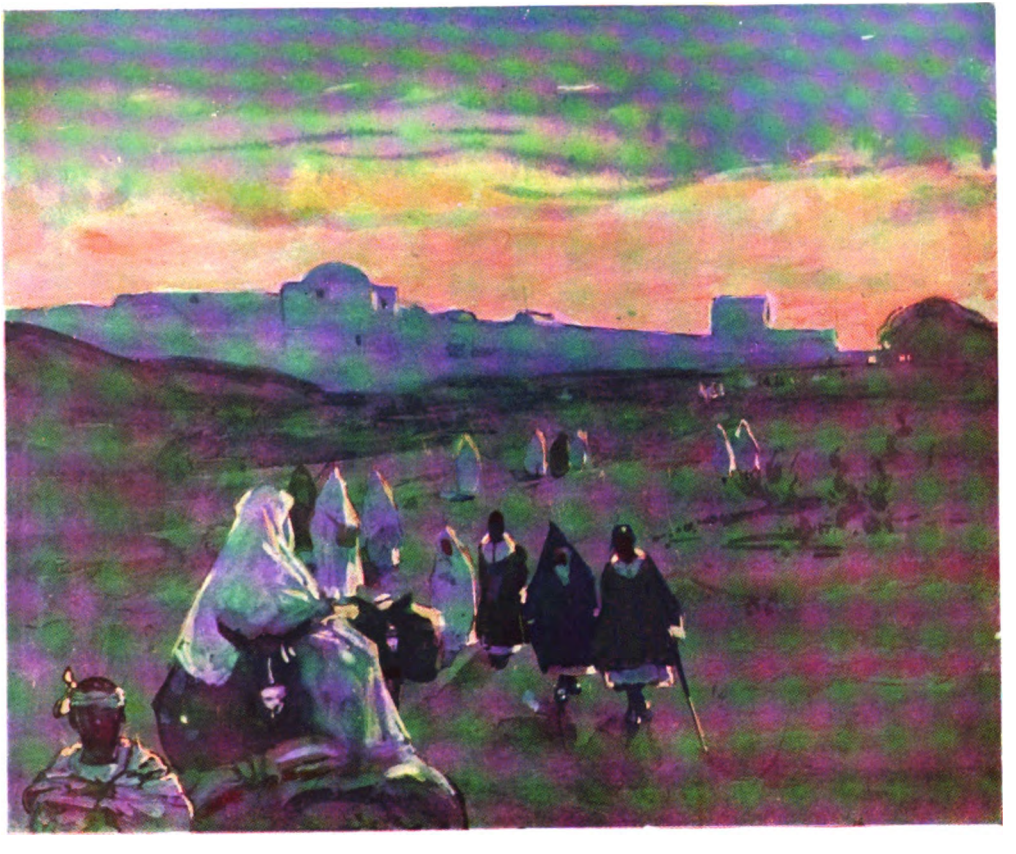

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CHAPTER XI

IN THE ARGAN FOREST

Life, even at its greatest and best, may be compared to a froward child, who must be humoured and played with till he falls asleep, and then the care is over.—*Goldsmith.*

EARLY morning found the Tuesday market in full swing, and the town of Hanchen already astir in honour of the occasion. To realise the importance of the weekly gathering, it is well to remember that a market in the country here is the only substitute for the bazaar of the towns. Every douar within a ten-mile radius of Hanchen sends men and women to the Tuesday market to buy and sell. So it befell that the hillside slope, which was bare on the previous afternoon, hummed now like a hive, and was well nigh as crowded. Rough tents of goats' or camels'-hair cloth sheltered everything likely to appeal to the native mind and resources, —tea, sugar, woollen and cotton goods, pottery, sieves, padlocks, and nails being to all appearance the goods most sought after by the country Moor. Quite a brisk demand for candles prevailed; they were highly-coloured things, thick at the base and tapering to the wick. There was a good sale too for native butter, that needed careful straining before it could be eaten with comfort,

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and there were eggs in plenty, fetching from twopence to threepence the dozen, a high price for Morocco, and brought about by the export trade that has developed so rapidly in the last few years. For the most part the traders seemed to be Berbers or of evident Berber extraction, being darker and smaller than the Arabs, and in some cases wearing the dark woollen outer garment, with its distinctive orange-coloured mark on the back. Women and little children took no small part in the market, but were perhaps most concerned with the sale of the chickens that they brought from their homes, tied by the legs in bundles without regard to the suffering entailed. The women did rather more than a fair share of porters' work too. Very few camels were to be seen, but I noticed one group of half a dozen being carefully fed on a cloth, because, like all their supercilious breed, they were too dainty to eat from the ground. They gurgled quite angrily over the question of precedence. A little way from the tents in which hardware was exposed for sale, bread was being baked in covered pans over a charcoal fire fanned by bellows, while at the bottom of the hill a butcher had put up the rough tripod of wooden poles, from which meat is suspended. The slaughter of sheep was proceeding briskly. A very old Moor was the official slaughter-man, and he sat in the shade of a wall, a bloody knife in hand, and conversed gravely with villagers of his own age. When the butcher's assistants had brought up three or four fresh sheep and stretched them on the ground, the old man would

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rise to his feet with considerable effort, cut the throats that were waiting for him very cleanly and expeditiously, and return to his place in the shade, while another assistant spread clean earth over the reeking ground. Some of the sheep after being dressed were barbecued.

I saw many women and girls bent under the weight of baskets of charcoal, or firewood, or loads of hay, and some late arrivals coming in heavily burdened in this fashion were accompanied by their husband, who rode at ease on a donkey and abused them roundly because they did not go quickly enough. Mules and donkeys, with fore and hind leg hobbled, were left in one corner of the market-place, to make up in rest what they lacked in food. Needless to say that the marketing was very brisk, but I noted with some interest that very little money changed hands. Barter was more common than sale, partly because the Government had degraded its own currency until the natives were fighting shy of it, and partly because the owners of the sheep and goats were a company of true Bedouins from the extreme South. These Bedouins were the most interesting visitors to the Tuesday market, and I was delighted when one of them recognised Salam as a friend. The two had met in the days when an adventurous Scot set up in business at Cape Juby in the extreme South, where I believe his Majesty Lebaudy the First is now king.

The Saharowi was an exceedingly thin man, of wild aspect, with flowing hair and scanty beard. His skin was burnt deep brown, and he was dressed in a blue cotton garment of guinea cloth made in simplest

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fashion. He was the chief of a little party that had been travelling for two months with faces set toward the North. He reminded Salam of Sidi [1] Mackenzie, the Scot who ruled Cape Juby, and how the great manager, whose name was known from the fort to Tindouf, had nearly poisoned him by giving him bread to eat when he was faint with hunger. These true Bedouins live on milk and cheese, with an occasional piece of camel or goat flesh, and a rare taste of mutton. When Salam's friend came starving to Cape Juby, Sidi Mackenzie had given him bread. The hungry man ate some and at once became violently ill, his stomach could not endure such solid fare. Having no milk in the fort, they managed to keep him alive on rice-water. It would appear that the Saharowi can easily live on milk for a week, and with milk and cheese can thrive indefinitely, as indeed could most other folk, if they cared to forswear luxury and try.

The little party was travelling with some hundreds of sheep and goats, which were being tended a little way off by the children, and, large though their flocks seemed, they were in truth sadly reduced by the drought that had driven one and all to the North. The Saharowi explained to Salam that all the wandering Arabs were trekking northwards in search of land that had seen the rain ; and that their path was strewn with the skeletons of animals fallen by the way. These nomads carried their wives and little ones, together with tents and household impedimenta, on the camels, and

[1] Sidi is a Moorish title, and means "my Lord."

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ON THE ROAD TO ARGAN FOREST

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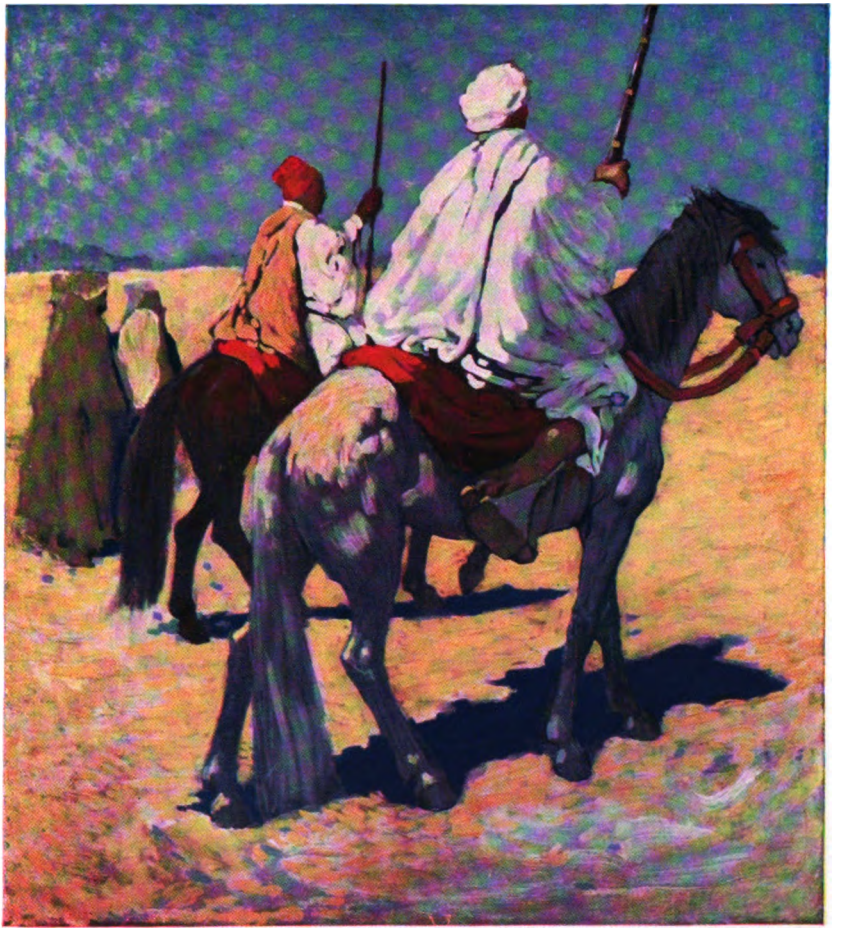

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ON THE ROAD TO ARGAN FOREST

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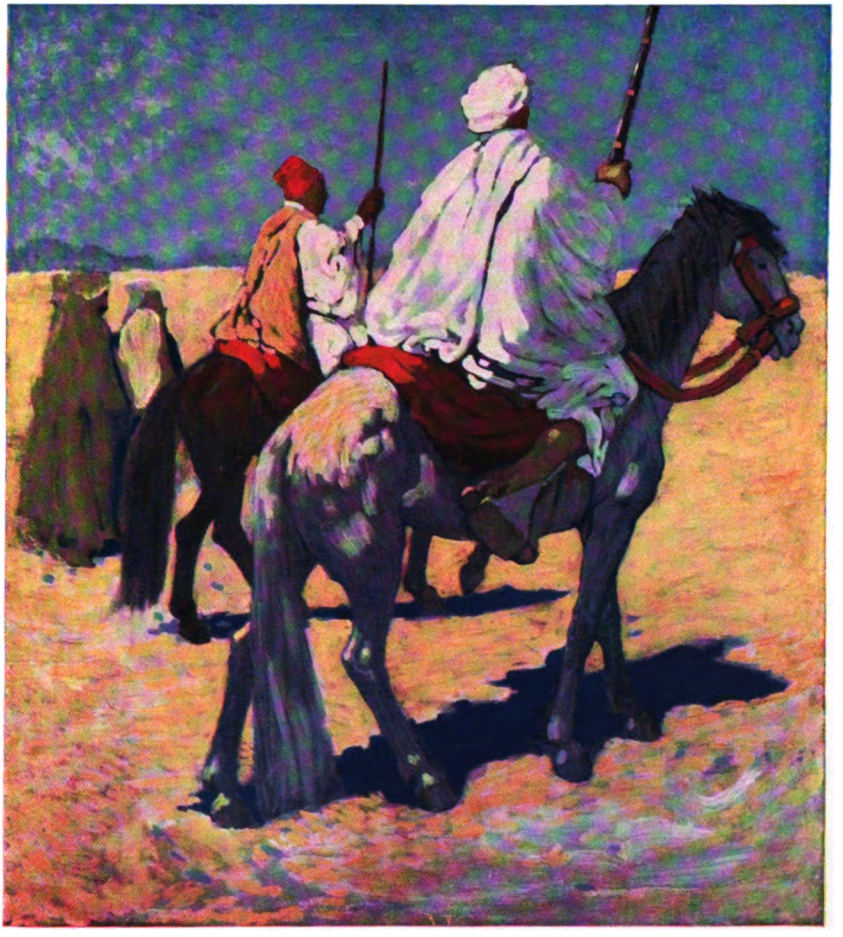

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walked on foot with the grown children in charge of the flocks. The sheep they had sold to the butcher were in fair condition, and fetched from four to five shillings in English money, or the equivalent of this sum in goods, for when a Saharowi approaches civilised lands he is generally in need of some of the products of civilisation, or thinks he is, though, at need, he manages excellently well without them.

Among the miscellaneous gathering that the Tuesday market had attracted to Hanchen I noticed a small company of acrobats from the Sus, and a medicine man of fierce aspect, who sat by himself under a rough tent, muttering charms and incantations, and waiting for Allah to send victims. This wonder-worker had piercing eyes, that seemed to examine the back of your head, long matted hair and a beard to match. He wore a white djellaba and a pair of new slippers, and was probably more dangerous than any disease he aided and abetted.

For the amusement of the people who did not care for acrobatic feats and stood in no need of the primitive methods of the physician, there was a story-teller, who addressed a somewhat attenuated circle of phlegmatic listeners, and a snake-charmer who was surrounded by children. Sidi ben Aissa undoubtedly kept the snakes —spotted leffas from the Sus—from hurting his follower, but not even the saint could draw *floos* from poor youngsters whose total wealth would probably have failed to yield threepence to the strictest investigator. Happily for them the charmer was an artist in

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his way; he loved his work for its own sake, and abated no part of his performance, although the reward would hardly buy him and his assistant a meal of mutton and bread at their labour's end. The boys of Hanchen were doing brisk business in the brass cases of cartridges that had been fired on the previous day, and without a doubt the story of the wonders of a repeating gun lost nothing in the telling.

There was no interval for rest when the hours of greatest heat came round. Late arrivals who travelled in on mule- or donkey-back renewed business when it slackened, and brought fresh goods to be sold or exchanged. The "Sons of Lions" had broken up the market at Sidi el Muktar on the previous Friday before it was properly concluded, and many natives, disappointed there, had come out to Hanchen to do their business, until there seemed to be nothing in any stall that lacked buyers. Even the old man who had a heap of scrap-iron when the market opened had sold every piece of it by four o'clock, though it would have puzzled a European to find any use for such rubbish. The itinerant mender of slippers was hard at work with three young lads, and I never saw any one of the party idle. Hawks and corbies fluttered over the butcher's ground, and I noticed a vulture in the deep vault of the sky. Pariah dogs would clear every bit of refuse from the ground before another day dawned, and in their nasty fashion would serve their country, for the weather was very hot and the odours were overpowering. Flies covered all unprotected meat until it ceased to look red,

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THE SNAKE-CHARMER

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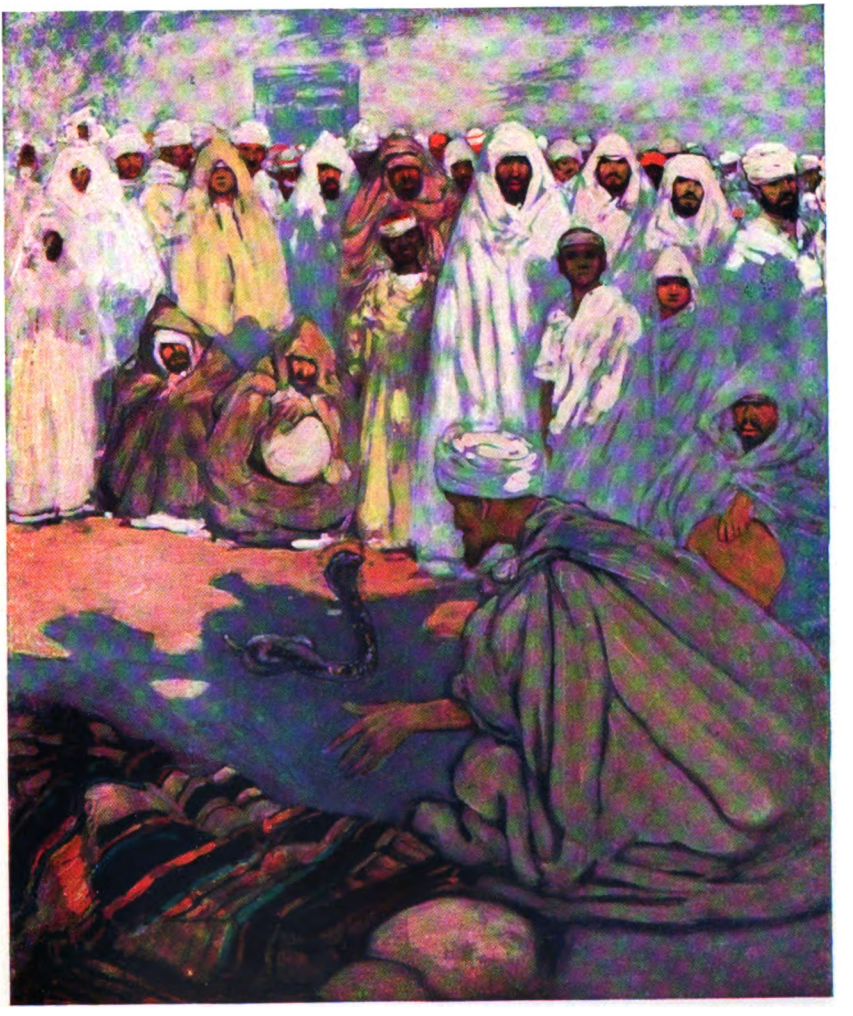

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THE SNAKE-CHARMER

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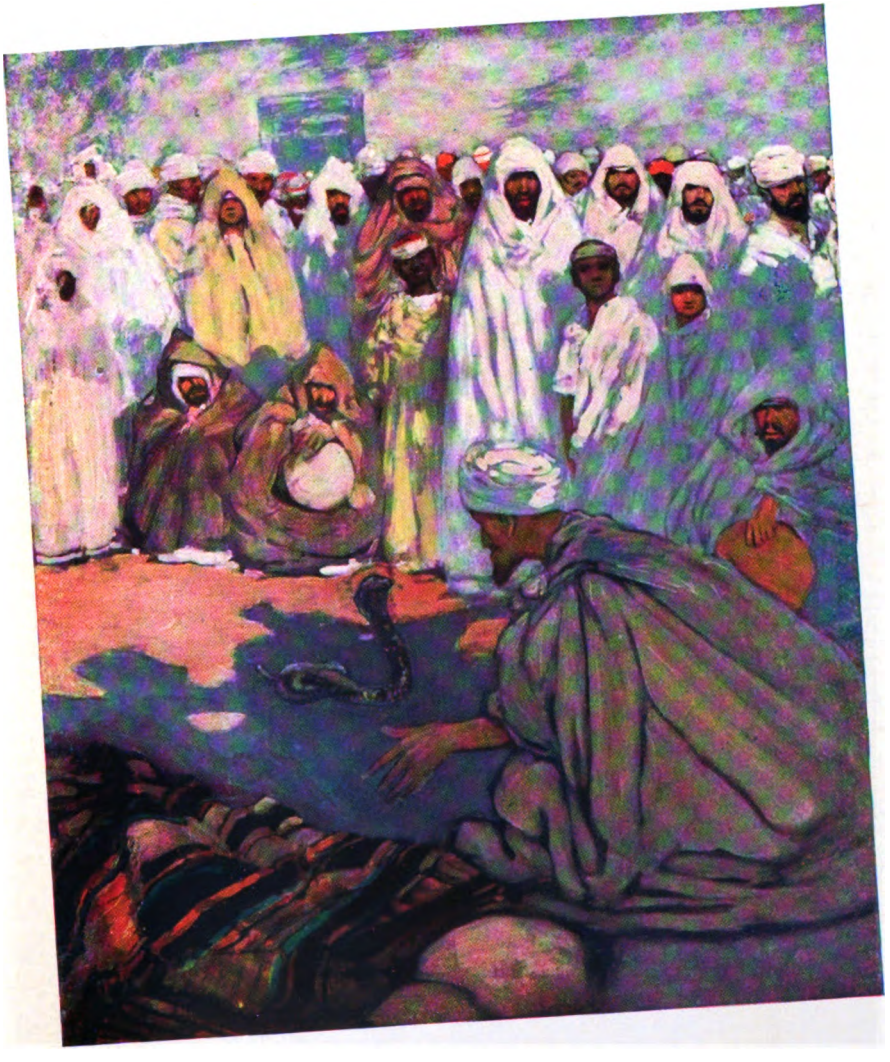

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and the stall of the seller of sweetmeats was a study in black and white: black when the swarms settled, and white for a brief moment when he switched them off with his feathery bamboo brush. Yet, in spite of the many difficulties under which trade was carried on, one could not help feeling that buyers and sellers alike were enjoying themselves hugely. The market did more than help them to make a living. It was at once their club, their newspaper, and their theatre, and supplied the one recreation of lives that—perhaps only to European seeming—were tedious as a twice-told tale.

Here the village folk were able to keep themselves posted in the country's contemporary history, for traders had come from all points of the compass, and had met men at other markets who, in their turn, brought news from places still more remote. Consequently you might learn in Hanchen's Tuesday market what the Sultan was doing in Fez, and how the Rogui was occupied in Er-Riff. French penetration in the far-off districts of no man's land beyond Tafilalt was well-known to these travelling market-folk; the Saharowi had spoken with the heads of a caravan that had come with slaves from Ghadames, by way of the Tuat, bound for Marrakesh. Resting by day and travelling by night, they had passed without challenge through the French lines. A visitor knowing Arabic and Shilha, and able to discount the stories properly, might have had a faithful picture of Morocco as its own people see it, had he been admitted to join the weather-worn, hardy traders who sat complacently eyeing their diminished store towards the

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close of day. Truth is nowhere highly esteemed in Morocco,[1] and the colouring superimposed upon most stories must have destroyed their original hue, but it served to please the Moors and Berbers who, like the men of other countries one knows, have small use for unadorned facts. Perhaps the troubles that were reported from every side of the doomed country accounted for the professional story-teller's thin audience. By the side of tales that had some connection with fact the salt of his legends lost its savour.

Towards evening the crowd melted away silently, as it had come. A few mules passed along the road to Mogador, the Bedouin and his company moved off in the direction of Saffi, and the greater part of the traders turned south-east to M'touga, where there was a Thursday market that could be reached in comfort. Hanchen retired within its boundaries, rich in the proceeds of the sale of fodder, which had been in great demand throughout the day. Small companies of boys roamed over the market-place, seeking to snap up any trifles that had been left behind, just as English boys will at the Crystal Palace or Alexandra Park, after a firework display. The Moorish youngsters had even less luck than their English brethren, for in Morocco, where life is simple and men need and have little, everything has its use, and a native throws nothing away. The dogs, eager to forestall the vultures, were still

[1] It is related of one Sultan that when a "Bashador" remonstrated with him for not fulfilling a contract, he replied, "Am I then a Nazarene, that I should be bound by my word?"

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IN CAMP

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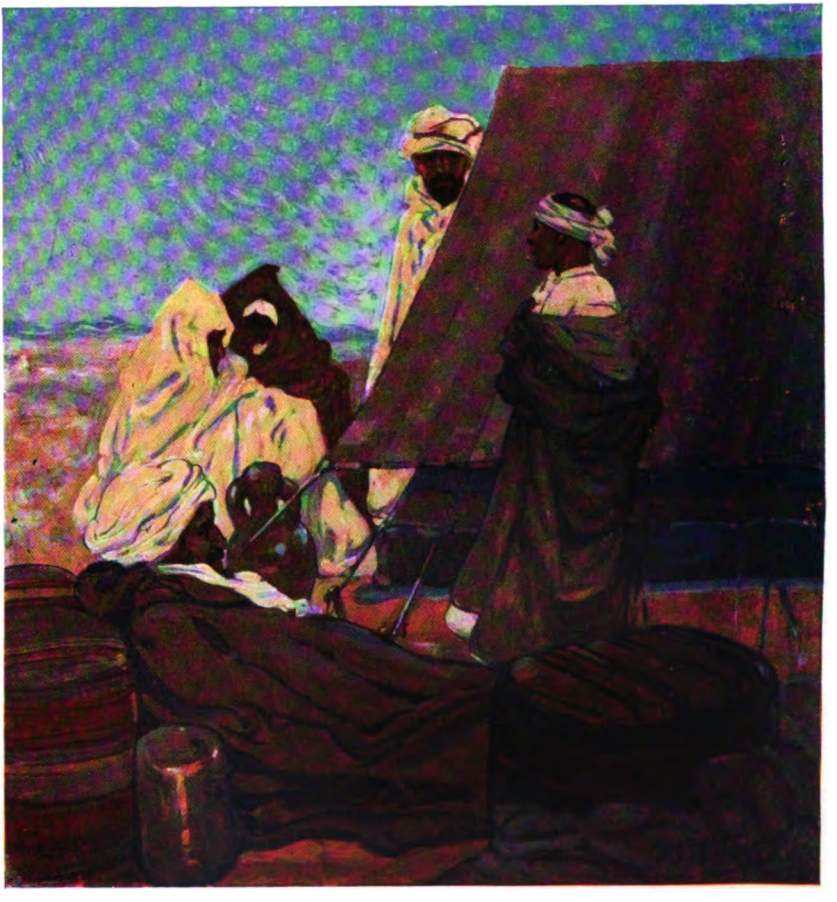

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fighting among themselves for the offal left by the butcher, when the villagers, who had come to take a late cup of tea with Salam and M'Barak, resumed their slippers, testified to the Unity of Allah, and turned to ascend Hanchen's steep hill.

Among the stories circulated in the Tuesday market was one to the effect that a lion had come down from the Atlas, and after taking toll of the cattle belonging to the douars on its road, had been shot at the western end of the forest. This tale was told with so much circumstance that it seemed worth inquiry, and I found in Mogador that a great beast had indeed come from the hills and wrought considerable harm; but it was a leopard, not a lion. It may be doubted whether lions are to be found anywhere north of the Atlas to-day, though they were common enough in times past, and one is said to have been shot close to Tangier in the middle of last century. If they still exist it is in the farthest Atlas range, in the country of the Beni M'gild, a district that cannot be approached from the west at all, and in far lands beyond, that have been placed under observation lately by the advance-columns of the French Algerian army, which does not suffer from scruples where its neighbour's landmarks are concerned. Most of the old writers gave the title of lion or tiger to leopards, panthers, and lemurs; indeed, the error flourishes to-day.

On the road once again, I found myself wondering at the way in which British sportsmen have neglected the Argan Forest. If they had to reach it as we did, after long days and nights in a country that affords

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little attraction for sportsmen, it would be no matter for wonder that they stay away. But the outskirts of the forest can be reached from Mogador at the expense of a five-mile ride across the miniature Sahara that cuts off Sidi M'godol's city from the fertile lands, and Mogador has a weekly service of steamers coming direct from London by way of the other Moorish ports. No part of the forest is preserved, gun licenses are unknown, and the woods teem with game. Stories about the ouadad or moufflon may be disregarded, for this animal is only found in the passes of the Atlas Mountains, miles beyond the forest's boundaries. But, on the other hand, the wild boar is plentiful, while lynx, porcupine, hyæna, jackal, and hare are by no means rare. Sand-grouse and partridge thrive in large quantities. There are parts of the forest that recall the Highlands of Scotland, though the vegetation is richer than any that Scotland can show, and in these places, unknown save to a very few, the streams are full of trout, and the otter may be hunted along the banks. The small quantity and poor quality of native guns may be held to account for the continual presence of birds and beasts in a part of the world that may not fairly be deemed remote, and where, save in times of stress, a sportsman who will treat the natives with courtesy and consideration may be sure of a hearty welcome and all the assistance he deserves. Withal, no man who has once enjoyed a few days in the Argan Forest can sincerely regret Europe's neglect of it: human nature is not unselfish enough for that.

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A COUNTRYMAN

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The ride through the last part of the forest was uneventful. Argan, kharob, and lotus, with the help of a few of the "arar" or gum sandarac trees, shut off the view to the right and left. Below them dwarf-palm, aloe, cactus, and sweet broom made a dense undergrowth, and where the woodland opened suddenly the ground was aflame with flowers that recalled England as clearly as the cuckoo's note. Pimpernel, convolvulus, mignonette, marigold, and pansy were English enough, and in addition to these the ox-daisies of our meadows were almost as common here. Many companies of the true Bedouins passed us on the road, heralded by great flocks of sheep and goats, the sheep pausing to eat the tops of the dwarf-palms, the goats to climb the low-lying argan trees, while their owners stayed to ask about the water supply and the state of the country beyond.

Though we might consider ourselves far removed from civilisation, these Bedouins felt that they were all too near it. The change from their desert land, with its few and far-scattered oases, to this country where there was a douar at the end of every day's journey, was like a change from the country to the town. They could not view without concern a part of the world in which men wore several garments, ate bread and vegetables, and slept under cover in a walled village, and one wild fellow, who carried a very old flint-lock musket, lamented the drought that had forced them from their homes to a place so full of men. So far as I was able to observe the matter, the Berber muleteers of El

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Arbi bel Hadj ben Haidah looked with great scorn upon these Bedouins, and their contempt was reciprocated. In the eyes of the Berbers these men were outcasts and "eaters of sand," and in the eyes of the Bedouins the muleteers were puling, town-bred slaves, who dared not say their right hands were their own.

Perhaps the difficulty in the way of a proper understanding was largely physical. The Berbers believe they came to Morocco from Canaan, forced out of Palestine by the movement of the Jews under Joshua. They settled in the mountains of the "Far West," and have never been absorbed or driven out by their Arab conquerors. Strong, sturdy, temperate men, devoid of imagination, and of the impulse to create or develop an artistic side to their lives, they can have nothing in common with the slenderly built, far-seeing Arab of the plains, who dreams dreams and sees visions all the days of his life. Between Salam and the Bedouins, on the other hand, good feeling came naturally. The poor travellers, whose worldly wealth was ever in their sight—a camel or two, a tent with scanty furniture, and a few goats and sheep—had all the unexplored places of the world to wander in, and all the heavens for their canopy. That is the life the Arabs love, and it had tempted Salam many hundreds of miles from his native place, the sacred city of Sheshawan, on the border of Er-Riff. The wandering instinct is never very far from any of us who have once passed east of Suez, and learned that the highest end and aim of life is not to live in a town, however large and ugly, and suffer

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without complaining the inevitable visits of the tax collector.

Our tent was set for the night in a valley that we reached by a path half-buried in undergrowth and known only to the head muleteer. It was a spot far removed from the beaten tracks of the travellers. In times past a great southern kaid had set his summer-house there: its skeleton, changed from grey to pink in the rosy light of sun-setting, stood before us, just across a tiny stream fringed by rushes, willows, and oleanders. When the Court Elevated by Allah left Marrakesh for the north some years ago, the sorely-tried natives had risen against their master, they had captured and plundered his house, and he had been fortunate in getting away with a whole skin. Thereafter the tribesmen had fought among themselves for the spoils of war, the division of the china and cutlery accounting for several deaths. All the land round our little camp had been a garden, a place famous for roses and jessamine, verbena and the geraniums that grow in bushes, together with countless other flowers, that make the garden of Sunset Land suggest to Moors the beauties of the paradise that is to come. Now the flowers that had been so carefully tended ran wild, the boar rooted among them, and the porcupine made a home in their shade. As evening closed in, the wreck of the great house became vague and shadowy, a thing without outline, the wraith of the home that had been. Grey owls and spectral bats sailed or fluttered from the walls. They might have been past owners or servitors who had suffered metamorphosis. The sight

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set me thinking of the mutual suspicions of the Bedouins and the Susi traders, the raiding of Sidi el Muktar, the other signs of tribal fighting that had been apparent on the road, the persecution of the Moor by his protected fellow-subjects,—in short, the whole failure of the administration to which the ruin that stood before me seemed to give fitting expression. This house had not stood, and, after all, I thought Morocco was but a house divided against itself.

In the face of all the difficulties and dangers that beset the state, the Sultan's subjects are concerned only with their own private animosities. Berber cannot unite with Moor, village still wars against village, each province is as a separate kingdom, so far as the adjacent province is concerned. As of old, the kaids are concerned only with filling their pockets; the villagers, when not fighting, are equally engrossed in saving some small portion of their earnings and taking advantage of the inability of the central Government to collect taxes. They all know that the land is in confusion, that the Europeans at the Court are intriguing against its independence. In camp and market-place men spread the news of the French advance from the East. Yet if the forces of the country could be organised,—if every official would but respond to the needs of the Government and the people unite under their masters,—Morocco might still hold Europe at bay, to the extent at least of making its subjection too costly and difficult a task for any European Government to undertake. If

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MOONLIGHT

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Morocco could but find its Abd el Kadr, the day of its partition might even yet be postponed indefinitely. But next year, or the next—who shall say?

My journey was well nigh over. I had leisure now to recall all seen and heard in the past few weeks and contrast it with the mental notes I had made on the occasion of previous visits. And the truth was forced upon me that Morocco was nearer the brink of dissolution than it had ever been—that instability was the dominant note of social and political life. I recalled my glimpses of the Arabs who live in Algeria and Tunisia, and even Egypt under European rule, and thought of the servility and dependence of the lower classes and the gross, unintelligent lives of the rest. Morocco alone had held out against Europe, aided, to be sure, by the accident of her position at the corner of the Mediterranean where no one European Power could permit another to secure permanent foothold. And with the change, all the picturesque quality of life would go from the Moghreb, and the kingdom founded by Mulai Idrees a thousand years ago would become as vulgar as Algeria itself.

There is something very solemn about the passing of a great kindgom—and Morocco has been renowned throughout Europe. It has preserved for us the essence of the life recorded in the Pentateuch; it has lived in the light of its own faith and enforced respect for its prejudices upon one and all. In days when men overrun every square mile of territory in the sacred name of progress, and the company promoter

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in London, Paris, or Berlin acquires wealth he cannot estimate by juggling with mineralised land he has never seen, Morocco has remained intact, and though her soil teems with evidences of mineral wealth, no man dares disturb it. There is something very fascinating about this defiance of all that the great Powers of the world hold most dear.

One could not help remembering, too, the charm and courtesy, the simple faith and chivalrous life, of the many who would be swallowed up in the relentless maw of European progress, deliberately degraded, turned literally or morally into hewers of wood and drawers of water—misunderstood, made miserable and discontented. And to serve what end? Only that the political and financial ambitions of a restless generation might be gratified—that none might be able to say, "A weak race has been allowed to follow its path in peace."

Salam disturbed my meditations.

"Everything shut up, sir," he said. "I think you have forgot: to-morrow we go early to hunt the wild boar, sir."

So I left Morocco to look after its own business and turned in.

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TO THE GATE OF THE PICTURE CITY

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A MOORISH GIRL

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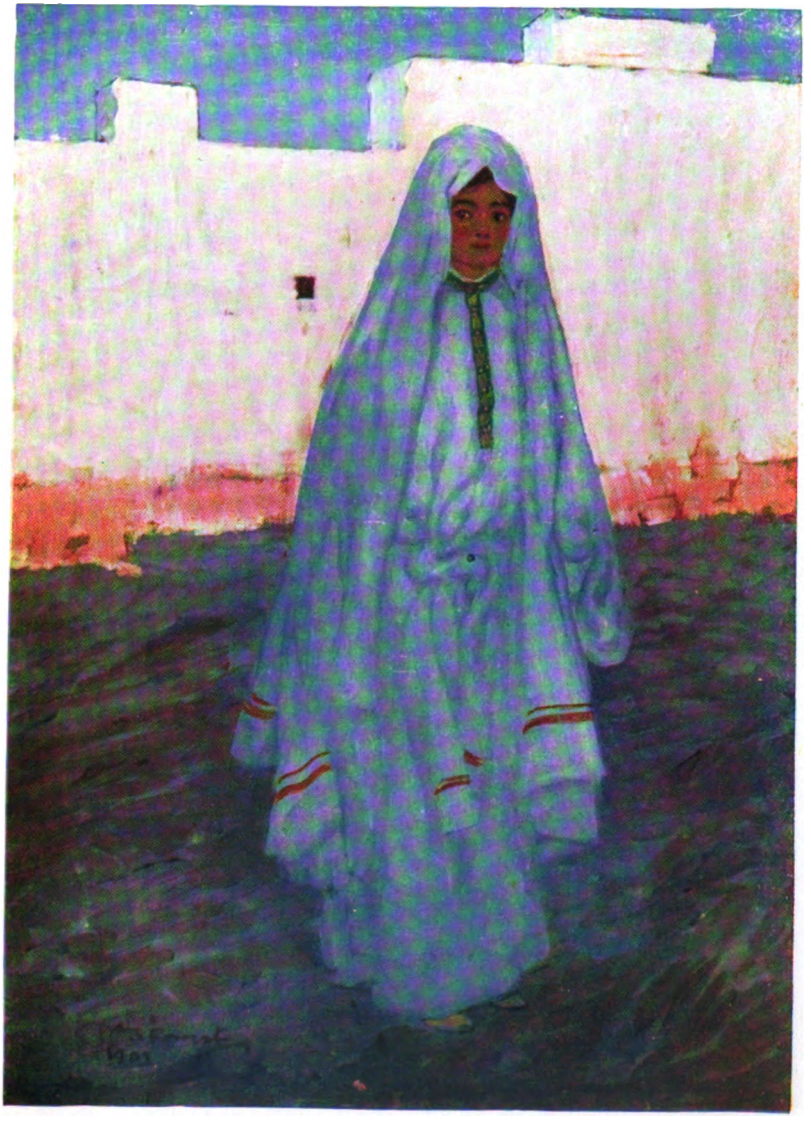

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CHAPTER XII

TO THE GATE OF THE PICTURE CITY

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maiden-hair,
That bids fear creep as a snake through the woodlands, felt
In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,
In the stress of the sun?

A Nympholept.

By the time the little camp was astir and the charcoal fires had done their duty to eggs, coffee, and porridge, Pepe Ratto, accompanied by two of his Berber trackers, rode into the valley, and dismounted on the level ground where our tent was pitched. At first sight the sportsman stood revealed in our welcome visitor. The man whose name will be handed down to future generations in the annals of Morocco's sport would attract attention anywhere. Tall, straight, sunburnt, grizzled, with keen grey eyes and an alert expression, suggesting the easy and instantaneous change from thought to action, Pepe Ratto is in every inch of him a sportsman. Knowing South Morocco as few Europeans know it, and having an acquaintance with the forest that is scarcely exceeded by either Moor or Berber, he gives as much of his life as he can spare

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to the pursuit of the boar, and he had ridden out with his hunters this morning from his forest home, the Palm Tree House, to meet us before we left the Argans behind, so that we might turn awhile on the track of a "solitaire" tusker.

So the mules were left to enjoy an unexpected rest while their owners enjoyed an uninterrupted breakfast, and the kaid was given ample time in which to groom his horse and prepare it and himself for sufficiently imposing entrance into the Picture City[1] that evening. Salam was instructed to pack tents and boxes at his leisure, before he took one of my sporting guns and went to pursue fur and feather in parts of the forest immediately adjacent to the camp. A straight shot and a keen sportsman, I knew that Salam would not bother about the hares that might cross his path, or birds that rose in sudden flight away from it. His is the Moorish method of shooting, and he is wont to stalk his quarry and fire before it rises. I protested once that this procedure was unsportsmanlike.

"Yes, sir," he replied simply. "If I wait for bird to fly may be I miss him, an' waste cartridge."

This argument was, of course, unanswerable. He would follow birds slowly and deliberately, taking advantage of wind and cover, patient in pursuit and deadly in aim. Our points of view were different. I shot for sport, and he, and all Moors, for the bag. In this I felt he was my superior. But, barring storks, all creatures were game that came within Salam's range.

[1] Mogador, called by the Moors "Suera," *i.e.* "The Picture."

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A NARROW STREET IN MOGADOR

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No Moor will harm a stork. Even Moorish children, whose taste for destruction and slaughter is as highly developed as any European's, will pick up a young stork that has fallen from its nest and return it to the mother bird if they can. Storks sit at peace among the women of the hareem who come for their afternoon airing to the flat roof-tops of Moorish houses. Moorish lovers in the streets below tell the story of their hopes and fears to the favoured bird, who, when he is chattering with his mandibles, is doing what he can to convey the message. Every True Believer knows that the stork was once a Sultan, or a Grand Wazeer at least, who, being vain and irreligious, laughed in the beards of the old men of his city on a sacred day when they came to pay their respects to him. By so doing he roused the wrath of Allah, who changed him suddenly to his present form. But in spite of misdeeds, the Moors love the stately bird, and there are hospitals for storks in Fez and Marrakesh, where men whose sanctity surpasses their ignorance are paid to minister to the wants of the sick or injured among them. Many a time Salam, in pursuit of birds, has passed within a few yards of the father of the red legs or his children, but it has never occurred to him to do them harm. Strange fact, but undeniable, that in great cities of the East, where Muslims and Christians dwell, the storks will go to the quarter occupied by True Believers, and leave the other districts severely alone. I have been assured by Moors that the first of these birds

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having been a Muslim, the storks recognise the True Faith, and wish to testify to their preference for it. It is hard to persuade a Moor to catch a stork or take an egg from the nest, though in pursuit of other birds and beasts he is a stranger to compunction in any form.

One of the trackers gave me his horse, and Pepe Ratto led the way down the stream for a short distance and then into thick scrub that seemed to be part of wild life's natural sanctuary, so quiet it lay, so dense and undisturbed. After the first five minutes I was conscious of the forest in an aspect hitherto unknown to me; I was aware that only a man who knew the place intimately could venture to make a path through untrodden growths that were left in peace from year to year. It was no haphazard way, though bushes required careful watching, the double-thorned lotus being too common for comfort.

My companion's eye, trained to the observation of the woodlands in every aspect, noted the stories told by the bushes, the gravel, and the sand with a rapidity that was amazing. Twenty-five years of tireless hunting have given Pepe Ratto an instinct that seems to supplement the ordinary human gifts of sight and hearing. Our forefathers, who hunted for their living, must have had this gift so developed, and while lying dormant in Europeans, whose range of sports is compassed by the life of cities and limited game preserves, it persists among the men who devote the best years of their life to pitting their intelligence against that of the brute creation. The odds are of course very

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A NIGHT SCENE, MOGADOR

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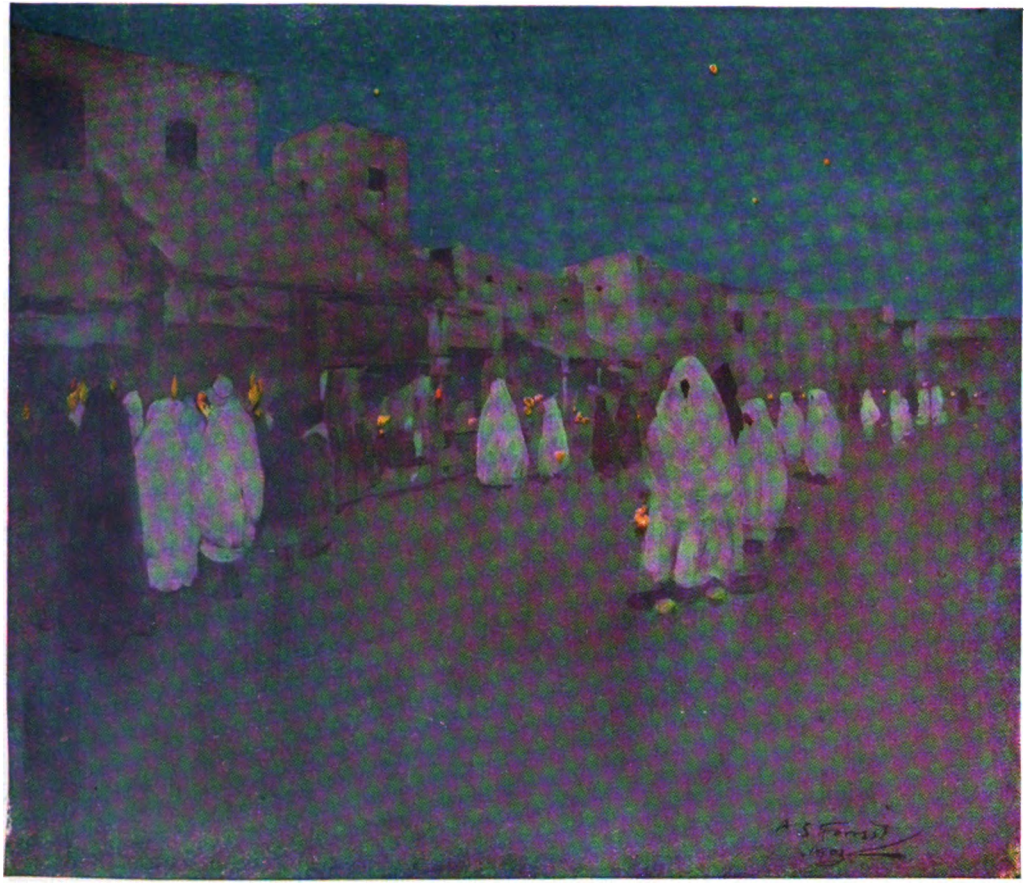

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A NIGHT SCENE, MOGADOR

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much in favour of the human being, but we may not realise readily the extreme cunning of hunted animals. The keen sportsman, who rode by my side pointing out the track of boar or porcupine, showing where animals had been feeding, and judging how recently they had passed by difference in the marks too faint for my eyes to see, confessed that he had spent months on the track of a single animal, baffled over and over again, but getting back to his quarry because he had with him the mark of the feet as copied when he tracked it for the first time.

"No boar has four feet absolutely identical with those of another boar," he said, "so when once you have the prints the animal must leave the forest altogether and get off to the Atlas, or you will find him in the end. He may double repeatedly on his own tracks, he may join a herd and travel with them for days into the thick scrub, where the dogs are badly torn in following him, but he can never get away, and the hunter following his tracks learns to realise in the frenzied changes and manœuvres of the beast pursued, its consciousness of his pursuit." In these matters the trained and confirmed hunter's heart grows cold as the physiologist's, while his senses wax more and more acute, and near to the level of those of his prey.

That is but a small part of the hunter's lore. As his eyes and ears develop a power beyond the reach of dwellers of cities with stunted sight and spoiled hearing, he grows conscious of the great forest laws that rule the life of birds and beasts—laws yet unwritten in any

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language. He finds all living things pursuing their destiny by the light of customs that appeal as strongly to them as ours to us, and learns to know that the order and dignity of the lower forms of life are not less remarkable in their way than the phenomena associated with our own.

To me, the whirring of a covey of sand-grouse or partridges could express little more than the swift passage of birds to a place of security. To the man who grew almost as a part of the forest, the movement was something well defined, clearly initiated, and the first step in a sequence that he could trace without hesitation. One part of the forest might be the same as another to the casual rider, or might at best vary in its purely picturesque quality. To the long trained eye, on the other hand, it was a place that would or would not be the haunt of certain beasts or birds at certain hours of the day, by reason of its aspect with regard to the sun, its soil, cover, proximity to the river or other source of water supply, its freedom from certain winds and accessibility to others, its distance from any of the tracks that led to the country beyond the forest and were frequented at certain seasons of the year. The trained hunter reads all this as in a book, but the most of us can do no more than recognise the writing when it has been pointed out to us.

So it happened that my morning ride with the hardy hunter, whose achievements bulk next to those of the late Sir John Drummond Hay in the history of Moorish sport, had an interest that did not depend altogether

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HOUSE-TOPS, MOGADOR

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upon the wild forest paths through which he led the way. He told me how at daybreak the pack of cross-bred hounds came from garden, copse, and woodland, racing to the steps of the Palm Tree House, and giving tongue lustily, as though they knew there was sport afoot. One or two grizzled huntsmen who had followed every track in the Argan Forest were waiting in the patio for his final instructions, and he told them of hoof prints that had revealed to his practised eye a "solitaire" boar of more than ordinary size. He had tracked it for more than three hours on the previous day, past the valley where our tents were set, and knew now where the lair was chosen.

"He has been lying under an argan tree, one standing well away from the rest at a point where the stream turns sharply, about a mile from the old kasbah in the wood, and he has moved now to make a new lair. I have made a note of his feet in my book; he had been wallowing less than twenty-four hours before when I found him. To-morrow, when we hunt the beast I hope to track to-day, the pack will follow in charge of the huntsmen. They will be taken through the wood all the way, for it is necessary to avoid villages and cattle pasture when you have more than a score of savage dogs that have not been fed since three o'clock on the previous afternoon. They are by no means averse from helping themselves to a sheep or a goat at such times."

We had ridden in single file through a part where the lotus, now a tree instead of a bush, snatched at us

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on either side, and the air was fragrant with broom, syringa, and lavender. Behind us the path closed and was hidden; before us it was too thick to see more than a few yards ahead. Here and there some bird would scold and slip away, with a flutter of feathers and a quiver of the leaves through which it fled; while ever present, though never in sight, the cuckoo followed us the whole day long. Suddenly and abruptly the path ended by the side of a stream where great oleanders spread their scarlet blossoms to the light, and kingfishers darted across the pools that had held tiny fish in waters left by the rainy season. When we pushed our horses to the brink the bushes on either hand showered down their blossoms as though to greet the first visitors to the rivulet's bank. Involuntarily we drew rein by the water's edge, acknowledging the splendour of the scene with a tribute of silence. If you have been in the Western Highlands of Scotland, and along the Levantine Riviera, and can imagine a combination of the most fascinating aspects of both districts, you have but to add to them the charm of silence and complete seclusion, the sense of virgin soil, and the joy of a perfect day in early summer, and then some faint picture of the scene may present itself. It remains with me always, and the mere mention of the Argan Forest brings it back.

Pepe Ratto soon recovered himself.

"Yes," he said, in reply to my unspoken thoughts, "one seldom sees country like this anywhere else. But the boar went this way."

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SELLING GRAIN IN MOGADOR

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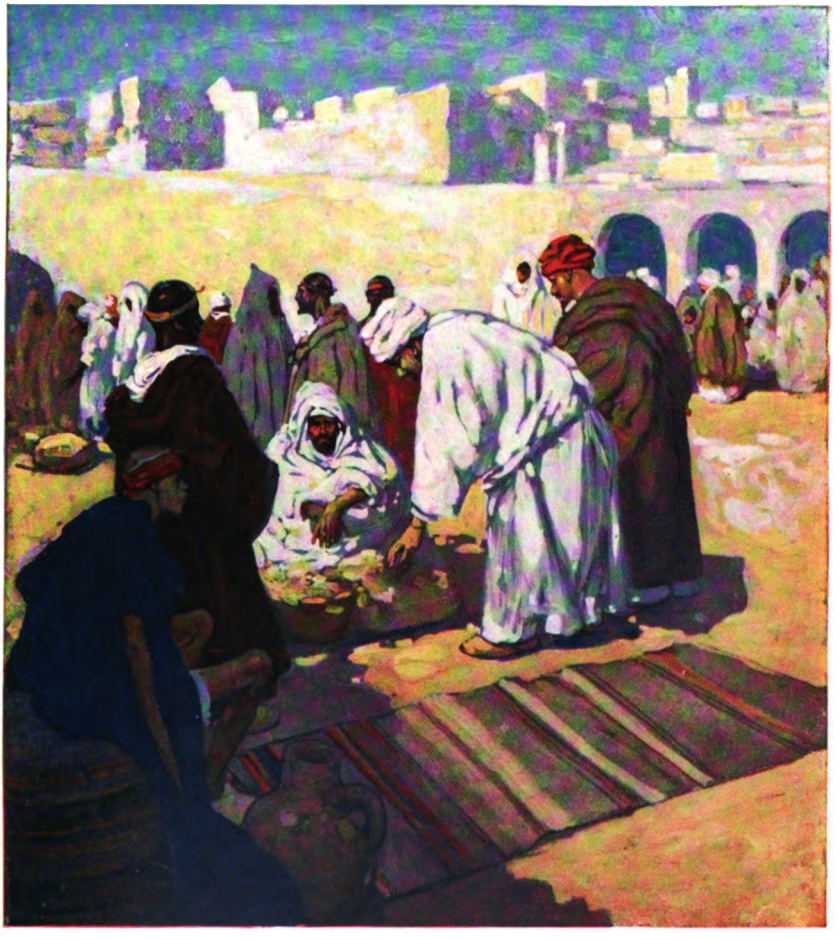

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correspondingly light. Here at last the track moved in a circle.

"See," said the hunter, a suspicion of enthusiasm in his tone, "he has been circling; that means he is looking for a lair. Stay here, if you will, with the horses while I follow him home." And in a minute he was out of sight.

I waited patiently enough for what seemed a long time, trying to catch the undersong that thrilled through the forest, "the horns of elf-land faintly blowing," the hum such as bees at home make when late May sees the chestnut trees in flower. Here the song was a veritable psalm of life, in which every tree, bird, bush, and insect had its own part to play. It might have been a primeval forest; even the horses were grazing quietly, as though their spirits had succumbed to the solemn influences around us. The great god Pan himself could not have been far away, and I felt that he might have shown himself—that it was fitting indeed for him to appear in such a place and at such a season.

The hunter came back silently as he had gone.

"All's well," he said as he remounted; "he is a fine fellow, and has his lair most comfortably placed. And you should have come with me, but your creaking English gaiters would have disturbed him, while my soft native ones let me go within thirty or forty yards of his new home in safety." My companion was wearing the Moorish gaiters of the sort his trackers used—things made of palmetto. When they follow on foot

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So saying, the hunter uppermost again, he wheeled round, and we followed the stream quite slowly while he looked on either hand for signs of the large tusker. "We must find where he has settled," he continued. "Now the weather is getting so warm he will move to some place that is sandy and moist, within reach of the puddles he has chosen to wallow in. And he won't go far from this part, because the maize is not yet ripe."

"Do they grow maize in this province?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the hunter. "I give the farmers the seed and they plant it, for a boar is as fond of green maize as a fox is of chickens." He paused and showed me the marks of a herd that had come to the water within the past two days to drink and wallow. While I could see the marks of many feet, he could tell me all about the herd, the approximate numbers, the ages, and the direction they were taking. Several times we dismounted, and he examined the banks very carefully until, at the fourth or fifth attempt, tracks that were certainly larger than any we had seen revealed the long-sought tusker.

We went through the wood, the hunter bending over a trail lying too faint on the green carpet of the forest for me to follow. We moved over difficult ground, often under the blaze of the African sun, and, intent upon the pursuit, noted neither the heat nor the flight of time. For some two miles of the dense scrub, the boar had gone steadily enough until the ground opened into a clearing, where the soil was sandy and vegetation

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SELLING ORANGES

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the trackers wear leather aprons too, in order to deaden the sound made by their passage through the resisting undergrowth.

Then we rode back by another route, down paths that only an Arab horse could have hoped to negotiate, through densely wooded forest tracks that shut out the sun, but allowed its brightness to filter through a leafy sieve and work a pattern of dappled light and shadow on the grass, for our delectation. Most of the way had been made familiar in pursuit of some wild boar that would not stand and fight but hurried into the wildest and most difficult part of the forest, charging through every bush, however thick and thorny, in vain endeavour to shake off the pitiless pack. For my companion no corner of the forest lacked memories, some recent, some remote, but all concerned with the familiar trial of skill in which the boar had at last yielded up his pleasant life.

We came quite suddenly upon the stream and past a riot of green bamboo and rushes, saw the kaid's house, more than ever gaunt and dishevelled by daylight, with the shining water in front, the wild garden beyond, and on the other bank the Susi muleteers sitting with the black slave in pleasant contemplation of the work Salam had done. Kaid M'Barak dozed on one of the boxes, nursing his beloved gun, while the horse equally dear to him stood quietly by, enjoying the lush grasses. Salam and the tracker were not far away, a rendezvous was appointed for the hunt, and Pepe Ratto, followed by his men, cantered off, leaving me to a delightful spell of rest, while Salam persuaded

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the muleteers to load the animals for the last few miles of the road between us and Mogador.

Then, not without regret, I followed the pack-mules out of the valley, along the track leading to a broad path that has been worn by the feet of countless nomads, travelling with their flocks and herds, from the heat and drought of the extreme south to the markets that receive the trade of the country, or making haste from the turbulent north to escape the heavy hand of the oppressor.

It was not pleasant to ride away from the forest, to see the great open spaces increasing and the trees yielding slowly but surely to the dwarf bushes that are the most significant feature of the southern country, outside the woodland and oases. I thought of the seaport town we were so soon to see—a place where the civilisation we had dispensed with happily enough for some weeks past would be forced into evidence once more, where the wild countrymen among whom we had lived at our ease would be seen only on market days, and the native Moors would have assimilated just enough of the European life and thought to make them uninteresting, somewhat vicious, and wholly ill-content.

The forest was left behind, the land grew bare, and from a hill-top I saw the Atlantic some five or six miles away, a desert of sand stretching between. We were soon on these sands—light, shifting, and intensely hot—a Sahara in miniature save for the presence of the fragrant broom in brief patches here and there. It

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was difficult riding, and reduced the pace of the pack-mules to something under three miles an hour. As we ploughed across the sand I saw Suera itself, the Picture City of Sidi M'godol, a saint of more than ordinary repute, who gave the city the name by which it is known to Europe. Suera or Mogador is built on a little tongue of land, and threatens sea and sandhills with imposing fortifications that are quite worthless from a soldier's point of view. Though the sight of a town brought regretful recollection that the time of journeying was over, Mogador, it must be confessed, did much to atone for the inevitable. It looked like a mirage city that the sand and sun had combined to call into brief existence—Moorish from end to end, dazzling white in the strong sun of early summer, and offering some suggestion of social life in the flags that were fluttering from the roof-tops of Consuls' houses. A prosperous city, one would have thought, the emporium for the desert trade with Europe, and indeed it was all this for many years. Now it has fallen from its high commercial estate; French enterprise has cut into and diverted the caravan routes, seeking to turn all the desert traffic to Dakkar, the new Bizerta in Senegal, or to the Algerian coast.

Salam and M'Barak praised Sidi M'godol, whose zowia lay plainly to be seen below the Marrakesh gate; the Susi muleteers, the boy, and the slave renewed their Shilha songs, thinking doubtless of the store of dollars awaiting them; but I could not conquer my regrets, though I was properly obliged to Sidi M'godol for

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bringing me in safety to his long home. Just before us a caravan from the South was pushing its way to the gates. The ungainly camels, seeing a resting-place before them, had plucked up their spirits and were shuffling along at a pace their drivers could hardly have enforced on the previous day. We caught them up, and the leaders explained that they were coming in from Tindouf in the Draa country, a place unexplored as yet by Europeans. They had suffered badly from lack of water on the way, and confirmed the news that the Bedouins had brought, of a drought unparalleled in the memory of living man. Sociable fellows all, full of contentment, pluck, and endurance, they lightened the last hour upon a tedious road.

At length we reached the strip of herbage that divides the desert from the town, a vegetable garden big enough to supply the needs of the Picture City, and full of artichokes, asparagus, egg plants, sage, and thyme. The patient labour of many generations had gone to reclaim this little patch from the surrounding waste.

We passed the graveyard of the Protestants and Catholics, a retired place that pleaded eloquently in its peacefulness for the last long rest that awaits all mortal travellers. Much care had made it less a cemetery than a garden, and it literally glowed and blazed with flowers —roses, geraniums, verbena, and nasturtiums being most in evidence. A kindly priest of the order of St. Francis invited us to rest, and enjoy the colour and fragrance of his lovingly-tended oasis. And while we rested, he

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talked briefly of his work in the town, and asked me of our journey. The place reminded me strongly of a garden belonging to another Brotherhood of the Roman Catholic Church, and set at Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, where, a few years ago, I saw the monks labouring among their flowers, with results no less happy than I found here.

After a brief rest we rode along the beach towards the city gate. Just outside, the camels had come to a halt and some town traders had gathered round the Bedouins to inquire the price of the goods brought from the interior, in anticipation of the morrow's market. Under the frowning archway of the water-port, where True Believers of the official class sit in receipt of custom, I felt the town's cobbled road under foot, and the breath of the trade-winds blowing in from the Atlantic. Then I knew that Sunset Land was behind me, my journey at an end.

THE END

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